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Isabel F. Hapgood
July 21, 1893

THE CAUSES OF THE SOUL

A

BOOK OF SERMONS

from

BY

DR. WILLIAM REED HUNTINGTON
RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, NEW YORK

Faithfully yours
W. R. Huntington
Isabel Hapgood

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
31 WEST 23D STREET
1891

day for annual

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TO THE PEOPLE OF

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,

Worcester, Massachusetts;

AND OF

GRACE CHURCH,

New York;

IN WHOSE SERVICE

THE YEARS OF MY MINISTRY HAVE BEEN PASSED,

THIS BOOK OF SERMONS

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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SERMON I.

THE CAUSES OF THE SOUL.

"*O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul.*"—LAM. iii. 58.

THE Book of Lamentations is the outcry of one who felt, deep down in his heart, the need of help. I say "who felt," rather than "who had felt," because although the language of this verse, taken by itself, would seem to breathe wholly of triumph and thanksgiving, it is evident, both from what goes before and from what follows after in the passage, that the writer accounted himself to be still under pressure. The Lord has pleaded the causes of his soul. The Lord has actually and as a matter of fact redeemed his life; but running through the very gratitude itself there is a strain of plaintiveness, a pathetic undertone, that makes us say, "This man is not quite free even yet." He speaks as some defendant on trial for his life might do, who has just listened to a plea made in his own behalf, so powerful, so eloquent, so convincing that he cannot help believing the case to be virtually

decided, cannot help thinking of himself as really safe, even though his judges have not yet formally, and in set phrase, pronounced his acquittal.

I take it that until the end of the age comes, and with it the manifestation of the sons of God, such must necessarily be the attitude of all believing men, all who by whatever leading have been drawn to put confidence in the divine Helper.

But postponing such thoughts a little while, let us look into this striking form of expression, "the causes of the soul," and see what we can make of it. It is significant that the plural number is employed. The soul has more than one cause to plead.

Roughly classified, the causes that are tried in ordinary courts of law are of two sorts, those in which the person accused is guilty and those in which he is innocent. The effort of judicature, the end and aim of courts, judges and juries, is to distinguish aright between these two classes of cases, to determine whether, in any given instance, the man on trial is to be held blameworthy or without blame.

Under which of these two heads are we to count what our prophet calls the "causes of the soul"? It may surprise you to have me reply, Under both of them. And yet I am persuaded that a little reflection will satisfy us all that the answer is justified by the fact. The causes of the soul, I repeat, are of both

sorts, those in which the soul in its own communings with itself confesses guilt, and those in which the feeling is,—No, I am not guilty; a web of perplexity and misunderstanding is woven close about me, everything looks to be against my innocence; but really, guilty I am not. What I need is some one to extricate, not some one to forgive me.

Upon this distinctior between the causes of the soul I wish to rest all that I may have to say. We shall soon discover that of what might be said, what can be said is a very small fraction indeed.

Take then, to begin with, those causes of the soul in which she acknowledges herself guilty. There are a great many ways of trying to explain away the sense of guiltiness in the human heart. The same instinct that prompts us in any differences that arise between others, our fellow-men, and ourselves, always, in the first instance, to stand on the defensive, to resent any suggestion that we may possibly be in the wrong, in a word to justify self. this same instinct asserts itself in our relations to our Maker; and there is a rooted reluctance in every soul to take upon the lips frankly, and in the spirit of genuine contrition, the words, "Father, I have sinned." And yet deeper down even than this reluctance lies the conviction that such confession ought to be made.

This is the acknowledgment of the men and women

of fullest, strongest, ripest nature. You say,—Oh, no! I am acquainted with scores of people, who have no such consciousness, make no such acknowledgment. The sense of sin troubles them not at all. "Guiltiness" is a word they have no occasion to use as regards themselves. They think too well of God to believe that He will ever punish, if indeed it must be conceded that He exists, which they doubt.

Yes, it must be admitted that there are a great many such people, and they are often very agreeable people, accomplished, versatile, cultivated it may be; at any rate, people who are, as we say, exceedingly pleasant to meet. The question is, do such people adequately represent human nature in its heights and depths? Are we safe in taking their word for it as to the possibilities of the soul's experience? Are we quite sure that they have thoroughly explored the whole vast region covered by the words "hope" and "fear," "love" and "hate," "joy" and "sorrow," so that they can be trusted, depended upon, when they giv it as the result of their investigations, that as for this matter of a man's being a sinner and needing forgiveness, there really is nothing in it? We are, perhaps, a little too reaay to accept as our authority upon all subjects, those whom we know to be good authorities upon some subjects. A man may be an expert in one department, and a very poor

adviser indeed in another. Testimony is of weight in proportion to the familiarity of the witness with the facts about which he testifies. If I want accurate information as to the climate and products of a distant territory, I go to some one who has been there; and no matter how rough or uncultivated he may be, I would rather have his evidence than that of the most accomplished writer or critic, whose whole knowledge of the place had been drawn from the map.

To put the case strongly, picture to yourself an aged man, who has seen much of the trials and troubles of this mortal life, whose face is seamed with marks that tell of mental struggle, of conflict with doubt, with difficulty, with pain, whose eye has lost the flash that once belonged to it, but keeps still the glow and penetrative power that tell of active life within, call him à-Kempis, if you will, or St. Augustine, or Keble, or Muhlenberg. Now set opposite him some fresh-cheeked, light-hearted, cheery-voiced young fellow, who knows not very much of life, to be sure, but is quick-witted and intelligent, thoroughly well-read, informed as to the very latest phase of contemporary thought, literary, social, political, able to instruct you on a thousand points of scholarship in almost any department you may choose. To which of the two, let me ask, should you the

more naturally, or with the more confidence turn, were the question to be discussed, not one about rocks or shells, or pictures, or pottery, or artist's proofs, or first editions, but a question of the powers and possibilities of the human heart? Which of them would be the best authority, say you, on such a point as this one before us now, namely, the soul's attitude toward God its Maker as respects innocence and guilt?

Now the fact is that the light, flippant, careless, unthinking dwellers on the surface of this earth of ours are all of them on the side of dissent from the serious view of life, present and future; they are all of them to a man ready to chime in with the cry that it makes no difference, "the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." I do not say that men of weight and power are not found ranged on that side, too. There are many such. But, as a rule, it remains true that what we call moral earnestness, strength of character, is found with those who do believe that there is a God, and that it makes a real difference, both to Him and to us, whether we are walking in the way of his commandments or not.

Just as voices have a "range," and those are reckoned richest that assert for themselves the largest compass, so it is with the spirits and souls of men.

In looking back over the past, and round about us in the present, we do well to choose for our authorities, in the matter of religious truths, those whose words seem to strike deepest into the heart. To satisfy ourselves therefore about this question, whether the soul's sense of guilt be a real thing or not, we turn to the more serious and thoughtful natures, and take their word for it rather than the word of those who suppose they can settle the whole matter by a sneer or a jest.

But now the question comes up, and it is certainly worth looking at, Why should one whose cause is a guilty cause care to have it pleaded? Why not confess judgment, and take the consequences? "O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul." Is this a thing to be desired, that the Lord should take up or help forward the cause of the offender? High-minded advocates sometimes refuse to defend a criminal when it is perfectly evident that the offence charged was really committed. Let the law take its course, they say. And ought it not to be so in men's relations to their Maker? If they have really broken his law, ought they not to be willing to meet the penalty, instead of expecting or desiring any one to plead their cause? This seems to have a reasonable sound. Apparently it falls in and harmonizes with what we see of God's methods in the natural world. Whoever breaks

law, in that sphere, does have to meet the consequence and bear the penalty, that is plain. The man who throws himself before a moving train is crushed. There is no pleading of his cause that can save him. He has offended against a law that executes itself. He dies. Must it not be so, it is argued, must it not be so in the realm spiritual? Is it not eternally true; in all worlds, here and hereafter, must it not be true, that for him who transgresses there is nothing in store but punishment, and a punishment proportioned by exactest measure to the degree of the offence?

To all which I merely answer that if it be indeed so, then is the word Gospel emptied of meaning, and the title "our Saviour" robbed of all its power to charm. For what element of good tidings is there in the message, Do wrong, and you shall be punished? And what need have we of a Saviour, if there be nothing evil from which it is possible for us to be saved? Ah, but He saves us from evil, it may be replied, by warning us that if we do wrong evil must come. He is a cautionary Saviour. He helps us by showing what the law is more clearly than any one else shows us. My friends that is but a meagre picture of the Christ who has won the passionate love of a half a hundred generations of men. Can it be that that is the whole of it? Is it imagin-

able that the picture of a moral teacher with his finger sternly pointed to the maxim, "This do, and thou shalt live," is it imaginable, I say, that this is all that the preaching of the cross has meant, that this has converted the nations? No, depend upon it, there is something more in that word "Gospel" than merely the warning Take care; something more in that name Saviour than Instructor.

That ancient sufferer whose words make the substance of our text was reaching after, and had partly grasped, a truth which Jesus Christ came into the world to make so clear that every one might grasp it, namely this, that with God there is forgiveness, not, indeed, the weak-minded, easy-tempered condoning of sin which it is an insult to forgiveness to call by that name, but a costly forgiveness involving intensest suffering. "O Lord, thou has pleaded the causes of my soul." If sympathy and that intimate identifying of one's self with another, which advocates know something of, when seeking with all their might to save the life of a defendant in a capital case, if these can, as they sometimes do, involve keen suffering, can we wonder at men's putting a similar interpretation on the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion? The truth is, there is a feeling deep down in the human heart that if we are to be helped at all, the help must come from some source higher than

our own level. It is all very well to say complacently that men ought to be willing, and not only willing but glad, to bear the punishment of their sins, and so to expiate them. But is it quite certain that when we allow ourselves to use language of this sort we at all appreciate what the punishment our sins deserve would be, or what it would mean to bear it?

That Christ came down into human life, dwelt with us, shared our sorrows, toiled, suffered, and all in order that he might be the more closely identified with us, and so the better be our advocate, the better plead the causes of the human soul,—this is the Gospel, this is the glad news, and how different it all sounds from the bare, Be good and thou shalt be rewarded, be bad and thou shalt be punished.

No doubt there are petty quibbles innumerable that can be brought against the doctrine of Christ our Advocate, and beside the petty quibbles there are also certain grave and really serious difficulties to a reflective mind, but, on the other hand, a certain massiveness and grandeur attach to the doctrine that of themselves go far toward satisfying us of its substantial truth. The gloom and mist that hang upon the sides of mighty mountains, here and there, hiding now a piece of forest, and again covering a ravine, these may make it impossible for us to see the whole mountain in one look. But then we are to

consider that if we could see the whole mountain in one look, it would not be the mountain that it is. The gloom and the mystery are themselves to be counted as among the credentials of the mountain's greatness. When God leads us up, as now and then He does, into the hill country of the soul, we are to be careful how we apply the little units of the valley to the measuring of the new and unaccustomed distances. Too often, in laboring to make their doctrine clear, religious teachers succeed only in making it thin. Knowing only in part that God is gracious and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in goodness and truth, let us rejoice to believe it in full.

It is one of the most precious characteristics of human love, as well as one of the most wonderful, that it has power to clothe its object with perfection. Shall we be less generous in our relations to our God? Shall we declare that we will not love Him at all, until we can understand Him perfectly? This is as much as to say that we will never love Him, for if He be the Infinite One the Bible tells us that He is, we never can know fully all there is to be known, never can find Him out unto perfection. If there be in God that which pleads for us, intercedes, supplicates forgiveness, let us lift up grateful eyes to heaven, and even if we cannot fully comprehend the manner of the

blessing, none the less fervently give thanks that blessed we are.

I have left myself but little time in which to speak of the other aspect of our prophet's most suggestive saying. We saw, you remember, when we began, how there were two kinds of causes in which the pleader might find scope for his persuasiveness, the cause of the guilty man, where the thing sought as the end of the pleading is a stay of sentence, reprieve, even if not forgiveness, and again the cause where the man accused has been the victim of suspicious circumstances and really is not the guilty person he seems to be. This last also is one of the causes of the soul, and calls loudly for an advocate. We are all liable to stand in need of vindication of this sort. No men escape wholly misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Perhaps it would not be putting the matter too strongly to say that there is probably no time when a man is not in a false position as regards some of those about him; no time when, on all sides, and by every observer, he is seen precisely as he really is. The atmosphere through which men look at the actions and the lives of the other men about them is never so absolutely clear that there is no distortion, no undue foreshortening or misplacement in the picture received into the eye. Ordinarily this is tolerable enough; we expect a certain measure of

misunderstanding, are prepared for it, and do not mind encountering it. But there are times in the lives of some men when misapprehension and unjust judgment seem to hem them in on every side. Innocent at heart, and sure that they are innocent, they yet bend and waver under the crushing load of suspicion which adverse circumstances has laid upon their shoulders. Then it is that the soul, helpless to free itself from its calamitous entanglement, calls out to God for aid. And how is it that the Lord does plead the cause of such a soul as this environed one we have in mind? He does it by his providence, by his ordering of events. How full are the Psalms, and how full the Book of Job, of ejaculations expressive of this belief. David was many a time sore beset by adverse circumstances, but he never faltered in his faith that somehow and at sometime the Lord, in whom he trusted, would bring his soul out of trouble. He had no doubt whatever that, in the end, God would make his righteousness as clear as the light, and his just dealing as the noon-day. And recall the striking words in which another one of the Old Testament worthies gives voice to the same courageous faith, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." My dear friends, the end

and aim of what I have had to say this morning has been to emphasize this one thought, that our help cometh from the Lord. It is not by cultivating an introspective, self-analyzing habit of mind that we are likely to find the way to peace. We are living out these lives of ours too much apart from God. We toil on dismally, as if the making or the marring of our destinies rested wholly with ourselves. It is not so. We are not the lonely, orphaned creatures we let ourselves suppose ourselves to be. The earth, rolling on its way through space, does not go unattended. The Maker and Controller of it is with it, and around it, and upon it. He is with us here and now. In this church where we have met to worship Him, He is present, and when we go back to our homes He will be present there. We cannot escape Him. Why should we desire to do so? He knows us infinitely more thoroughly than we know ourselves. He loves us better than we have ever dared to believe could be possible. Conscience-stricken, guilty, perplexed, spoken against, misjudged, there is no one we can turn to with such confidence as to Him; no advocate so trustworthy. He pleads the causes of the soul.

SERMON II.

RENEWAL.

"*And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.*"—REV. XXI. 5.

So then, it seems, there is one foundation which the shock of change can never overturn. I call your attention to the source from which this Voice that is in our text proceeds—it is the throne.

The seer is witnessing, remember, what looks to be a universal break-up of all created things. He uses strong language; it is "a new heaven and a new earth," he says.

The first heaven, that is, the old one with which he was familiar, the first heaven and the first earth have passed away. And yet it is plain that in the midst of the catastrophe one thing abides. There is One who sits upon a throne, who speaks, who says "Behold, I make all things new."

Before we take up and consider what the Voice says, let us give some further thought to this matter of the throne for I feel sure we shall find blessing

and help in doing so. The symbolism of the throne is the symbolism of stability. It is the planted seat of power. It is the settled place whence authority springs. According to the paternal theory of government, the throne is the Father's chair, from which the household's law goes forth. Its very structure is suggestive. The throne lies upon the ground, broad and square and firm. Perpetuity is of the very essence of its nature. The waves of popular wrath rage and swell around it, the tides of public opinion ebb and flow; it, the centre of unity, the seat of authority, stands fast. This is the idea of the throne; and who shall deny that it is a most majestic one? Take the idea illustrated as we may see it in the life of any one of the great nationalities that have preserved their identity through long periods of time,—take the story of England, with which we are familiar, and than which there could be no better for our purpose. Start with the throne on the day William the Norman set it up in the open place his sword had cleared, and follow its history, century by century, down to the present day. Mark how it stands unshaken as storm after storm of change sweeps over the face of the nation. Nobles conspire against it, ecclesiastics try to undermine it, popular risings threaten it, usurpers claim it, once democracy put it aside for a season, again peaceful revolution transfers it to a collateral

line, but still the throne survives, the same that the Conqueror founded, the centre of authority, the centre of national unity, the centre of the whole people's associations, loyalties and loves. Citizens of a Republic as we are, believing in the "government of the people by the people" as we do, we cannot refuse to see the dramatic interest, to give it no higher name, that attaches to such a history as this. Yes, citizens of a Republic as we are, we still believe in a coming Kingdom of God, and can never afford to dispense with the truth that lies behind this symbolism of the throne.

What is that truth? Briefly this, that in the universe of which we make a part there are two great principles always at work; the principle of stability and the principle of change, and, furthermore, that the sovereignty, and this is the important point, the sovereignty belongs to the former, to the stability. I find this in the text; it is an announcement of universal change, but the voice that utters the announcement issues from the seat of permanence. It is not deep answering deep. It is not chaos uttering itself to chaos. It is not the inarticulate crash of doom. It is a word spoken. He that sitteth upon the throne says, Behold, I, beyond the reach or touch of change myself, Behold, I make all things new.

We shall perceive clearly the value of this founda-

tion thought as we proceed next to study the contents of the kingly decree, and its bearings upon ourselves.

Consider, first, the sense in which the words of the text are always and every day true. We are in the habit, and very properly so, of associating most of the sayings of the Book of Revelation with the future, and this verse, of all verses, we should be disposed, at first sight, to interpret of some far-off event hidden among the eternal years. Without denying that the words, in their most important sense, do have reference to the future, I yet shall easily persuade you that they may fairly be interpreted of the present also. When the Almighty says, "Behold, I make all things new," He is giving expression, not to a suddenly formed purpose, not to an altered intention, but simply to a principle of action, a law of conduct by which we daily see that He does guide Himself now, and by which, so far as we know anything to the contrary, He has guided Himself through the eternity of the past. When, therefore, He says, "Behold, I make all things new," we may, if we will, understand Him as meaning, That is my way, my use, my law, my habit; I am forever, and everywhere, the Renewer. We do not at all disparage the application of the words to the great future crisis which St. John has in view; we do not at all lessen their solemnity as a prediction of "the day of the Lord,"

when we thus discern in them a meaning which helps us to understand why that crisis is likely, why that judgment impends.

In order to bring out the thought let me lay down this general principle, that whatever thing is capable of life and growth, must, if it is to live and grow, be made the subject of continual renewal. Consider a plant growing in your window-garden. In one sense it is the same plant you put there a week or a month or a year ago; in another sense it is not the same. It has been continually taking in from the soil and from the atmosphere, through its roots and through its leaves, new material, and as continually it has been giving forth and putting away from itself the superfluous and dead products of the vital processes. When any plant, from any cause—the deprivation of sunlight and moisture, the burning of the drought or the touch of the frost—ceases to be capable of this constant process of renewal it dies, as we say, that is the end of it.

Moreover, what we see to be true of the plant, is true generally, as I just said, of everything that lives and grows. As it is true of vegetable life, so is it true of animal life. It is true of man in both of his natures; true of him in his body, true of him in his soul. Nay, the principle is of still wider application. We may discern its workings in the history of institutions. So-

cieties, churches, governments all come under the law. Whenever they are alive, whenever they are growing, you may discern in them this constant change; something in them is for ever dying, something in them is for ever coming to the birth. Why is the line of the history of the Christian Church dotted with Councils from Apostolic days to our own? Why do Congresses and Parliaments meet year after year and still always find enough to do in unmaking old laws and making new ones? It is because, in both Church and State, society is alive and growing, constantly assimilating new foods, constantly forming new fibre, constantly taking on, in one feature or another, an altered look. It is God's law. "Behold, I make—yes, am continually making—all things new." He is for ever the Renewer.

Now there is something unspeakably sad and depressing, as all will confess, in this view of the world and the life that is lived on it as subject to perpetual change, unless to our conviction of the stability of God's throne, which must be the root and ground of all our believing, we add two more convictions scarcely less important, namely, first this, that God has made the world a dying world in order that it may become a living world, and has not made it a living world in order that it may become a dying world; in other words, that life, not death, is his pur-

pose: and secondly this, that in God's processes of continual renewal, whether in the natural or the spiritual world, there are no violent breaks, no shocks of dislocation that wholly and in an instant sever the new from the old, but, on the contrary, that these two are always linked together; the new being not a reversal but a continuation of the old.

Dwell with me a few moments on these limiting truths, for they are well worth thinking about.

Life, I said, is God's purpose, not death; and this is the meaning of his renewals. We read the parables of Nature very much according to our moods. God has so made the visible world, and has so made us who dwell in it, that as an instrument of music responds to the feeling of the skilled soul of the composer using it, so sky and field, ocean and stream and forest answer to the states of mind in which they find us. To the glad heart, all Nature is full of gladness, to the oppressed heart it is all full of gloom. The child in his joy sees everywhere the bursting life; the grown man in his sorrow is very apt to see only the everywhere on-coming death. But the truth is that the bright side of Nature is the parable of righteousness, and the dark side the parable of sin. The cheerful view belongs to the believer, because to him only runs the promise of eternal life. Clearly as the Christian sees that this is a dying world, still

more clearly is he bound to see that it is a world continually coming into possession of new heritages of life. To those, on the other hand, who have no hope in Christ and no life in Him, the darkest aspect is the real and the only one. So long as they keep away from the Lord of life and refuse to have any part or lot with Him, they belong to the dying side of the world's existence; they are the truly "perishing class," not the poor, not the uneducated, but they, the godless. Oh, for some awakening vision to make them see, before it is too late, the bitter loss that awaits them; to make them hear, before it is too late, the entreaty, "Why will ye die?"

Thus we have his own word for it that He is not willingly the death sender, but always gladly the life bringer. The blithesome child is right, the despondent man is wrong.

And this leads me naturally to speak of the second of our two limiting and reassuring truths, namely, God's law of continuity,—how it is a part of his way in making the new thing never to forget, or neglect, or treat as if it had not been, the old. His making all things new in the regeneration will not be his making them out of nothing, but rather his re-making of them. Look about you and see if this view of the matter, full of comfort as we shall find it, be not substantiated by all that we are able to observe of God's

methods now. Do you anywhere find a new thing that is not in some way a product and result of an older thing?

We are tempted into taking the despairing view of God's law of renewal because we think that the past is not only gone, but lost. This is a blunder. Nothing is lost of which we preserve the precious results.

Your childhood, for example, is gone, but it is not lost. You could not be the man or the woman you are save for that childhood's having been. How then can you say that your childhood is lost? It lives on in your mature character. No other childhood could have produced precisely the man or the woman you are to-day.

This continuity, this keeping up of the chain of connection, is what is really meant by that much used and much abused word, "evolution."

This is God's way. He draws the new out of the old, not violently but slowly, gradually, continuously. The old that is fading away and ready to perish does not actually perish until the new has been grafted upon it. What has made the word "evolution" distasteful to devout minds, is not this thought of continuity, for who can fail to see that this is one of the leading thoughts that runs through Holy Scripture itself from first to last, but it is the fact that so many who speak

and write about evolution seem to forget utterly Him who sitteth upon the throne. They make the evolution a blind evolution, unfolding from itself, purposeless, inscrutable, merciless and loveless. They discern the great principle of perpetual change in all its far-reaching manifestations, but they fail to recognize that greater principle of stability and governance of which the symbol is the throne. That is why we hear about "godless theories of evolution." But evolution itself is not godless, for it is manifestly God's way. It is only the godless way of looking at evolution that troubles us and frightens us as we look on astonished to see how He makes all things new.

Take that very best of all living products the world can show, a Christian character; how did it become what it is? Suddenly? Abruptly? No; but by the quiet, gradual, patient shaping and moulding of the hand of the Spirit. Saint John is he who was once John; Saint Paul is he who was once Saul; new men, both of them, in Christ Jesus, but still new men made out of existing material, the old clay vivified by the breath of a better life, even a spiritual. And yet this process has not made the two men who have been the subjects of it utterly alike. The saintliness of Saint Paul is different from the saintliness of Saint John. Why? Because John differed from Saul at the start; and even in recreating them God would

not neglect his own law of continuity. Sainted, they are just as much unlike each other as they were unsainted. In making all things new for both of them, He that sitteth upon the throne has respected and preserved the identity of each. We see the same law holding, do we not, in the larger life of the whole Church? The Christian Church of this nineteenth century is certainly different, in very many ways, from the Church of the Crusades, for instance, as that in its turn differed widely from the Church of the catacombs and the martyrs, and yet it was one holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church through all the generations, the same body from first to last. Nay, we may push the principle further still in the same direction, and affirm that from the dawn of history there has always been a Church on earth, always an elect people of God, and that the Church of the Gospel is joined to the Church of the law and the prophets by ties and ligaments that bleed if you attempt to sever them.

But let us lift these thoughts of ours on and up into their grandest and best fulfilment. How will it be with the new heavens and the new earth? Will they be cut off by an impassable gulf of oblivion from all the memories, all the associations, all the home feeling of the old life? No, we do not so read the mind of God either in his

works or his word. His way of making all things new is not by the utter destruction and annihilation of the old, but rather by the remoulding and readjustment of it. The resurrection body in which Christ showed Himself to the disciples was a body changed indeed, but still one that they could recognize and know; and the identity, remember, extended to more than the body. For the risen Saviour all things had become new, but the renewal was in no sense inconsistent with keeping the affections that had belonged to the old life. "Simon Peter, lovest thou me?" What wealth of comfort in that thrice repeated question from the lips of the Christ who lived again! Or when he saith unto Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side." Is there no reassurance here for those who dread the new heavens and the new earth just for the reason that they are called "new?" Nothing could be more new than was that resurrection life of Christ, and yet we see we cannot fail to see, how intricately, how indissolubly it was wrapped up with the old life out of which it had come forth. Jesus standing by the Sea of Galilee after his resurrection evidently sustained to each of the Eleven a personal relation just as real, just as tender as that which had knit them to one another in the former days when on these same sands they

had taken sweet counsel together and walked as friends.

And so I like to think of that General Assembly and Church of the First-born which, with its glorified Head, is destined to survive the dissolution of things seen and temporal; I like to think of that, not as a new thing newly contrived and newly started, but as the old family of the people of God cleansed, beautified, transfigured, renewed, but still the same.

As with the resurrection body of the Christ, so with his body mystical, his Church, there will be change, adaptation to new conditions, fitness for larger and fuller life, and yet at the same time a continuity, a remembrance of the battles and the victories—yes, and of the defeats—of the far back militant days, when on the old earth and under the old heavens and before the former things had passed, it lived and struggled and endured. This is what makes the blessedness of our faith in the communion of saints. To the Christian believer, the heavenly life means the continuance of the earthly life in just so far as that earthly life was sanctified and made ready to have the other grafted upon it. Oh, let us welcome renewal here and now, my friends, let us seek it, let us pray more fervently than we do, not with our lips merely, but away down in our hearts let us pray for God's renewal of the soul, for the inspiration of that

holy breath which makes the spirit fresh—then there will be nothing to frighten or distress us, in the prospect of anything that may come, nothing that will seem forbidding or unwelcome in the thought of God's making all things new, for we shall feel persuaded that whatsoever was good in the old is certain to endure, and that in the economy of the All Wise nothing that is worth keeping can be lost.

So then, where we began, there let us end, at the throne. In moments of despondency and hopelessness, such moments as come to all of us, or certainly to most of us, in times of public anxiety and unrest, let us lean with all our might on that support. There is a throne. There is One whose throne it is. Behind change is stability. Beyond the shifting forms and shows of things, there stands the figure of the Father God, and on the throne beside Him our Elder Brother, Christ.

SERMON III.

WHY DO I LIVE?

"*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.*"—II Cor. v. 15.

We have here two things, the statement of a fact and the declaration of a purpose lying behind the fact. The fact stated is that Christ died for all, or, in theological phrase, the universality of the Atonement; the purpose assigned is that of giving to us men something better to live for than our own poor selfish interests. He died for all, that is the bold affirmation;—and why? It was in order that they which live should not, henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again. We see the subject in its outline. Be it our effort now to try to discover something of what that outline really includes.

It cannot but fill a heart sensitive to the gentler influence of religion with sadness to remember how often the very most tender and

touching of the sentences of God have been made the battle-ground of persistent controversy. It would almost seem sometimes as if the more sacred the truth involved, so much the more coarse and violent the wrangle over the interpretation must be. No article of the faith would appear, for instance, to call for a more reverential and delicate handling than that which sets forth the two-fold nature of the Word made flesh, the mystery of the birth at Bethlehem, Him who was Son of God and Son of Man, and yet it is one over which the wrath of disputants has waxed at times so hot and fierce as almost to threaten permanent disaster to the Church.

The very sacrament of love, the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, has been turned into an occasion for strife; and men have made them ready for battle either for or against some highly metaphysical theory of the real presence with as much alacrity and eagerness as if they were starting upon a campaign for the conquest of a kingdom, or the recovery of a lost province.

I do not mean to say that such controversies have been wholly without value, or without justification. Christ came not to bring peace but a sword. We are bidden to contend earnestly for the faith; and, doubtless, it is God's will that from the strife of tongues there should emerge, in due time, the clear-voiced

truth. Babel comes before Pentecost; the many dialects antedate the perfect language. Still the process is a painful one to watch. There can be no rough handling of the holy things without a brushing away of more or less of the bloom that makes the beauty of the fruit. Reverence once lost is not easy to be regained; and holy ground trodden by the too frequent step of intrusion does not readily recover the soft, elastic freshness of unspoilt turf.

I have been led into this line of remark by remembering that this very text of ours is one that has suffered grievously from the violence of debate. To look at it, a simple-hearted Christian might say there would seem to be no jutting point on which controversy could win a foothold if it tried, and yet it is a fact that one of the most memorable struggles in the history of religious thought has had, indeed may be said still to have, this plain statement, "He died for all," for its ground and centre. Who were the "all" for whom Christ died? and in what sense did He die for them? Was it as their deliverer, only, or as their vicarious substitute; their ransom also? These are questions which men who hold a common faith in the divinity of Christ, and in the supernatural import of his death, have not ceased to argue among themselves, and will not cease to argue.

But I do not propose that we should argue them

this morning; interesting as it might be to some of us to thread the intricacies of old controversy and fight over again the combats of heroes dead and gone. Still less do I purpose keeping silence as to the just and right interpretation of the words. But what I would like to do is to take for granted, in the same manner in which a mathematical reasoner takes his axioms and postulates for granted;—to take for granted for our present purpose the largest and most comprehensive interpretation which these first words can bear and then to go on to consider those other and following words which make the real burden of the text. The meaning, then, which we will agree to attach to the words "He died for all," is this, that there is no man who has lived, no man who is living, no man who shall live, whom the benefit of Christ's death did not, does not or will not in some measure and in some manner affect. This is far from saying that all souls will finally be saved. It is simply saying that seeing that He died for all, no line can be drawn of which it can be affirmed: on this side stand those in whose behalf Christ suffered; on that side those for whom He did not die. Or, to bring my meaning home to every one, let me put it in this way. There is nobody present in this Church at this moment, who can truthfully say, "For me the Saviour did not die." Substitute for the words "in

this Church" the wider phrase "in this world" and we shall have the belief which, as I have said, we are to take for granted in our further study of the text.

Then, as to the sense in which He died for us, whether in our behalf, as the leader in the charge who falls at the head of the column dies, or, in our stead, as the hostage who lets himself be killed rather than that his whole tribe or nation should be subjected to dishonorable terms of peace; here also we will take the most comprehensive interpretation possible for granted, and, assuming that the whole truth with respect to the sacrificial death of Christ does in fact cover both of these forms of statement to the exclusion of neither, we will again press on to grasp the practical thought and motive which the text enshrines. For, really, this saying of St. Paul's is one that was intended to take an immediate and firm grasp upon our daily lives. It was not meant to be a speculative utterance at all, but a direct appeal to the conscience and the will. We are not to look at it in the light of its being a complete answer to the problem, Why did Christ die? but rather as a reply to the pressing question which the soul is quick to ask, whether it has ever heard of Christ or not, Why do I live? It is not a full explanation of the interior *rationale* of the Atonement. It is, instead, a powerful and persuasive statement of one of the main pur-

poses of the Atonement. And there is great comfort, I venture to think, for plain people who lay no claim to intellectual subtlety or unusual gifts of insight into things profound, there is great comfort for such people in being assured that while the inner essence and nature of the Atonement of Christ is evidently a question that taxes the reasoning faculty to the utmost, the purpose of the Atonement as respects ourselves is something we can all of us understand. Why it was needful that Christ should suffer, it may not be easy for any man fully to set forth; but the end and object of his suffering are level to the apprehension of any one who cares to know. He died, the apostle says, in order "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." To attach us personally to Himself, to grasp our affections so powerfully as to succeed in drawing us wholly away from selfishness, to make us Christians by making us Christ's men, grappling us to Himself as his faithful lieges, his loyal and loving friends, this was his purpose, this his aim, in dying for us upon the altar of the cross.

In discussing the question of causes we must be careful to distinguish between causes past and causes future, between causes, that is to say, which immediately precede the results that follow them, and causes

which come under the head of motives, plans, purposes, designs. These last are technically called final causes, in other words, causes which are identical with the end in view. Thus it may be said of a man who has built a house, a dwelling for himself and his family, that the cause of his building it was his having made a fortune, but the "final cause" of his building it, the end looked forward to, was the having a settled home.

In common life we avail ourselves of a thousand things the causes of which we cannot understand, but the "final cause" of which is plain. Take the labor-saving machinery which is transforming the face of modern life. Everybody is brought more or less into contact with it, and every one shares to a greater or less extent the benefits which it has bestowed upon society, but not one man in twenty thousand is capable of explaining the interior mechanism whereby the results of which he is availing himself have been brought to pass. A few men make the study of steam or electricity the business of their lives, and thus attain to a partial acquaintance with the properties and powers of these agents; but the great bulk of those who ride in the train and send their messages over the wires know absolutely nothing of the structure of the engine or of the philosophy of the galvanic battery. We are content with

our knowledge of the "final cause," which in the one case is the transportation of persons and things, and, in the other, the transmission of intelligence. Into the inner and hidden causes which make the transportation and the transmission possible we lack the power to enter. Now it is the final cause of the Atonement which most concerns us as children of men, and this it is which Paul in the text so strikingly and persuasively sets forth. Why the Atonement is efficacious, why it pleased God so to order his work of saving men from sin and death, just how, in the innermost workings of that sacrifice, mercy stands related to justice, and law to love—these are, I do not say, unimportant questions, God forbid, but they are questions the wholeness of which we cannot possibly grasp: they are questions which it is not needful that every believer should be able to answer either to the satisfaction of others or to his own.

We may as safely leave these questions to the theologians, as we leave the other questions about causes of which we were just speaking to the men of science. But it is otherwise with the question of the bearing of what Christ did and suffered on our own lives and conduct. That is a matter which does come within the reach of our understandings. That is something we are bound to know, and not only to know, but to

act upon, for that brings up the whole question, and a most urgent one it is, Why do I live?

Every day it is becoming more and more evident that unless the Christian answer to this question be the true one, then there is no answer to be had. The condemnation of the other answers with which people try to content themselves lies in the simple fact that they do not wear; they break down. For a few years, when life is at its very best, they seem to serve their purpose well enough, but, in the end, they prove insufficient, futile, disappointing. This is tolerably evident in the case of such lives as are plainly and beyond all question lived for self, and for self only. Those who cannot see the blunder they are making in their own lives easily recognize it as a blunder, in the lives of other people. Probably there are few sensualists or misers who frankly acknowledge to their own consciences that they are sensualists and misers.

The men who practically, and so far as their examples go, give to the question, Why do I live? such answers as these "I live to accumulate money," "I live to take my pleasure whenever or however I may find it," "I live to gain power and to acquire place," "I live to get the better of my neighbor,"—I say the men who give these answers are not only condemned by the lookers on, but they are judged out of their own lips, as having failed to meet satisfactorily the

question they undertook to meet. And this self-condemnation not only betrays itself in the criticisms which such persons pass on others who are doing the same things as themselves, but it also, in some instances, seeks definite and articulate expression in the verdict which they themselves are found pronouncing, at the end of life, upon all that has gone before.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is by no means the only autobiography that culminates in the confession "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." From millions of tongues those pitiful words have fallen as their final summing up of the case. Yes, some one says deprecatingly, as if he would fain not be pushed to an unwelcome conclusion in the Gospel's favor, Yes, this is no doubt, in a measure, true as respects those who look for an answer to the question Why do I live? in the region of the lower desires, the baser passions of our nature; but what of the better choice which those make who seek their reward in the exercise of the intellect and the pleasures of the imagination: what of those who give themselves to the pursuit of art, of letters, of science, have not they something to say for themselves? Have not they a reason for living which is thoroughly adequate; and which makes it unnecessary for them to trouble themselves about Christ and his cross? Have not they something to say for themselves? Yes, they have, and it will do us good

to hear it. Listen then while I read the sentences, in which one of the controlling intellects of our day, one of the master minds, indeed, of all human history, a man not many years dead, gave his conclusions at the end of his career. "I despise humanity," he says "in all its strata. I foresee that our posterity will be far more unhappy than we are. The whole of life is the greatest insanity, and if for eighty years one strives and seeks, still one is obliged finally to confess that he has striven for nothing, and has found out nothing. Did we at least only know why we are in this world! But to the thinker everything is and remains a riddle, and the greatest good luck is that of having been born a semi-idiotic savage."

My friends, is it not like passing from the thick, unwholesome atmosphere of an over-heated, over-crowded room out into the fresh, bracing, sunshiny air of open day, when we turn our ears away from this exceeding bitter cry and listen to the clear voice of Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, giving to us his answer to the question, Why do I live?

"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

Peace through unselfishness, joy through love for a Deliverer in whom we can put supreme confidence; this is the Christian philosophy of living, and the

witness is yet to be found who after having given to it a fair and faithful trial pronounces it a deceit. Instances abound of men who after having all their lives long put a bold face on it, and proclaimed themselves stout-hearted, though far from righteousness, thoroughly contented and at ease, though not at peace with God, have, at the end, given the lie to their whole past by frankly revealing the deep and sullen discontent that had underlain it all. But show us the man who after having humbly striven through many a patient year to follow the footprints of Jesus Christ and, so far as might be, to return his love, show us such a man acknowledging upon his death-bed that it has been all a mistake, and that if he had his life to live over again he would proceed upon a wholly different plan. I do not mean to overstate the case, or to assert that all ungodly men, or even the greater number of them, acknowledge before they die that their selfishness was a mistake and their plan of life ill-chosen. Religion gains nothing by exaggerated statement. Thousands of unbelievers go to their graves with their self-satisfaction apparently undisturbed by a ripple of misgiving. I only say that some of the many who make selfishness the rule of life are bitterly sorry, when the end comes, for having done so, and are willing to confess it: while it is not on record, so far as I am aware, that any man at the end of an unselfish life, a

life, I mean, as nearly unselfish as it is given to mortals to live, ever declared that if he could live his life over again he would live it upon the opposite principle, and look out more sharply for himself and for his own than he had done.

The Christian believer then has this grand advantage. He can give a reason for living his life, tedious, wearisome, dull as it may look to the outward seeming, he can give a reason for living his life which not only carries dignity and beauty upon the face of it, but which will stand the wear and tear of experience and come out brightest at the last. I say it carries dignity and beauty upon its front, this answer which Christ's man is able and ready to make when challenged to show the value of life.

I am living, he says, or trying by God's help to live, not unto myself, but unto Him who died for me; and what that means is that I am a helper and a fellow-worker in the magnificent enterprise of bringing heaven down to earth, the headship, the leadership of which is in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Looking back through the history of the past and around among the living millions of the present, I find no person anywhere who so commands my confidence as He does, none who so irresistibly compels my homage. Therefore, I cast in my lot with Him. I see, I cannot help seeing, how much that is plausi-

ble can be urged against such a cause. I know, I cannot help knowing, the sore difficulties to be encountered by any one who so decides. But the fact that He gives me a purpose in life, an object, an aim, a goal, this outweighs everything else, and I follow on obedient to the magic of his call. For remember, we Christians are invited to live for Him, not only because He died for us, but because He rose again. We are not serving a dead Saviour. We are not living upon an ancient and almost outworn memory. Our leader lives; our teacher teaches still; our master builder, not content with having laid the foundation of the temple, stands beside us an invisible presence, watching us at the work while on every side the walls of the city of God arise. We too readily forget this best of all the articles of the faith, the belief in the living Christ. Our lives take hold of his life, and because He lives, these little lives of ours, which, cut off by themselves, would be worthless and insignificant enough, gain dignity and preciousness.

Let us have done then with whining complaints about the emptiness of life. If life is empty, it is empty because we let it be so. Christ is waiting, patiently waiting, as the sunshine waits on the outside of a closed shutter. Throw back the barrier, and He can flood your empty life with light until He has

filled it as full as full can be. For after all, what we want in our life is God's sunshine more than any thing or combination of things. Gladness is better than gold. One might as well talk of weighing a color, or a thought, or a note of music in a pair of balances, as dream of filling up a life with an abundance of things. It cannot be done. The soul is so capacious that all the furniture on earth will not suffice to deck out the merest corner of the vast interior. Light, light is what we want, something that fills all the space at once, however measureless, without an effort; something to see by, something to walk by, something to breathe cheerfulness into us, and life, and genial hope, this is what we need, and this is what to those who ask Him for it, the Father of lights will not refuse.

SERMON IV.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

"*Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

"*And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*"—MATT. xii. 31, 32.

A STRIKING testimony to the power which these solemn words have had over the minds of men is afforded by the absence of this one sacred name, "the Holy Ghost," from all the vocabularies of profaneness. Among the many blasphemies that may have fallen upon your ear during a life-time, you probably have never once listened to a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. I call this remarkable,—more than that, I call it encouraging, and for the reason that it shows how men whom we are accustomed to call bad men have often, after all, more reverence for what is holy than we give them credit for having—nay, more than they credit themselves with

having. Men who have lost their self-respect often pretend to have lost with it their respect for everything else. They glory in their shame. They try to persuade themselves and others that their recklessness has reached the point where they care for nothing that has the nature of restraint in heaven or earth. And yet even in such souls, hopeless as their case would seem to be, there is, oftener than we think it, a little spark of conscience left. Outlaws from human society, they yet hesitate to do that which might hopelessly and for ever outlaw them from the society of heaven. They may have committed crimes innumerable, and may have boasted of them; still, notwithstanding this, they shrink from the commission of what is worse than any crime, the unpardonable sin. The shrinking is to their credit.

But this absence of one particular name from the customary formulas of profane language may be understood in another way. It may be held to prove the proneness of men to set the letter above the spirit. We sometimes find a great carefulness about words associated with a great carelessness about the things for which the words stand; and so this anxious avoidance of a sacred name means very little, unless there be a corresponding anxiety to avoid blasphemy against the sacred person whom the name represents. I remember the case of a young man in college, who,

having fallen into a morbid state of mind under the pressure of religious excitement, went out upon a lonely bridge at midnight, and shouted out into the darkness words which he supposed to be the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It is not easy to believe that for doing this he fell under the fearful condemnation of which our Saviour speaks. On the other hand, it is not difficult to believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost may have been committed by persons who have never in any spoken utterance blasphemously used that awful name.

It becomes then a question of very deep moment, Wherein lies the essence of the sin of which it has been said that neither in this world nor in the next can it find forgiveness? What is it that makes this one blasphemy differ from all other blasphemies?

This is the point where the interest of the text centres.

Notice first, then, that the reason why the sin cannot be forgiven, is not to be sought in any unwillingness of God to pardon sin in general. Our Lord is careful to preface what He has to say with the strongest possible statement of God's willingness to forgive. "All manner of sin and blasphemy" shall be forgiven unto men, He tells us; and only after He has told us this does He go on to name the single exception to his statement. From this it would appear that there

must be something in the nature of this sin that distinguishes it from every other form of transgression and makes it of necessity unpardonable. It is a sin that will not be, simply because it cannot be forgiven. In order to understand this, we must consider what forgiveness is. Was the prodigal son forgiven when he was in the far country wasting his substance in riotous living? In one sense he was. In another and very important sense he was not. He was forgiven so far as this, that his father stood ready to pardon him, bore no malice against him, loved him still. He was forgiven in intention. But he was not forgiven in act, could not be forgiven in very deed and truth until penitence took possession of his soul and he turned and sought with tears the Father he had forsaken. So we see that to a complete forgiveness two things are essential the willingness to show mercy and the willingness to seek mercy. Without penitence on the part of the one forgiven, the forgiveness is an imagined and not a real thing. It exists as a purpose in the heart of him who has been wronged; it is not an accomplished fact.

Thus we begin to get light upon the question, How is it possible for any sin to be of a sort that cannot be forgiven? We see that in a certain sense all sin is unforgivable unless there be a willingness on the part of the sinner to be forgiven. God pardons only

penitents. But that which confers on the sin against the Holy Ghost so fearful an eminence among other sins, is this declaration that it not only is, but is for ever to remain unpardonable.

"Neither in the world to come,"—those are the words that give the text its sting. Without those words, there would be nothing more to inspire terror in these verses than in a hundred others, for the Bible everywhere teaches that without repentance there is no pardon and cannot be. But even people living in their sins always think of repentance as a future possibility. A man says, I know that I shall not be forgiven unless I repent, but then, I mean some day or other to repent. Now, the awfulness of the words we are pondering lies just here. They cut off from him who has blasphemed the Holy Ghost, the power to look forward to any repenting time. Neither in this world, neither in the world to come is such a one to look to be forgiven. What does it mean? Must it not mean this, that there is such a thing as a man's making repentance impossible for himself, and so of necessity making forgiveness impossible. If there be such a thing as a man's doing this, why then it is plain that it is himself and not God who has made the sin unpardonable.

But what is that state of mind in which repentance is an impossibility? This brings us to

the very heart of the matter, for in the text our direct question meets a direct answer; and it is this,—blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the name under which we recognize God in his most intimate and sacred relation to the soul. His work and office are symbolized in Scripture under the most various forms. He appears at the Baptism of Christ in a bodily shape like a dove, the carrier bird between God's world and ours, the emblem of holiness and peace. After the resurrection He is given forth under the form of breath. Christ breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," an emblem this of the Spirit's life-giving and reviving power. At Pentecost, He comes in wind and flame, betokening his energizing and enlightening mission. He is sent that He may bring motion into sluggish souls, and divine knowledge into darkened minds, and burn out the dross of sin, and make all things new. Thus we see that around this sacred name cluster all those ideas that, taken together, constitute our highest conception of the adorable One. Strength, Purity, Light, Life, and Love,—are not these the foundation pillars of the throne of God? and these are the words under which the nature and work of the Holy Ghost are revealed to us. Now, suppose a man by an act of deliberate and conscious choice renounces this God of Holiness, this Spirit of Light, and Life, and Love,—

deliberately and consciously renounces Him, and says, "These are things that I hate. I love darkness rather than light. Death and corruption are better than the life of God. His love I trample on and despise." Imagine a man, if you can imagine it, speaking to himself after this fashion, and proceeding to shape his life accordingly. Would not that be a kind of blasphemy which might well incapacitate the soul for repentance, and so, as a matter of necessary consequence, incapacitate it for forgiveness? It is told of some of the Hindoo ascetics that they will at times, in compliance with a vow, keep a limb in a constrained position until the natural use of it is wholly lost and gone. May not the habitual putting of evil for good and good for evil, bring on a similar paralysis of the soul? May not the devotees of the god of this world so keep the vows they make to him, as to rob themselves of the power to take the postures of a holier devotion?

We have seen that the reason why the sin against the Holy Ghost is an unpardonable one, does not lie in any unwillingness on God's part to forgive. Let us now try to understand the distinction drawn in the text between that blasphemy which dishonors the Son and that which dishonors the Spirit. "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the

Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him." Why should the sin against the Spirit be more awful than the sin against the Son, seeing that in the unity of the Godhead Son and Spirit are equal?

We shall find light upon this point, I think, by recalling the circumstances under which the words before us were first spoken. Jesus had been healing a demoniac. The Scribes and Pharisees, angered and perplexed because they knew not how to controvert so evident a proof of his supernatural power, took up the accusation that it was a power derived from below and not from above. Notwithstanding their professed belief that every good gift must come from God, they were bold to declare that this good gift had come from Satan. "He hath Beelzebub," they said, "and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils."

It was this purely malignant act of theirs that moved our Lord to utter the words of the text. Rather than receive Him as good, they were willing to turn traitors to goodness itself, and to say with Milton's Satan, "Evil, be thou my good."

But why was not this act of theirs pre-eminently a sin against the Son of Man. It was to Jesus that the insult was addressed, and yet, instead of saying, as He said when the Roman soldiers mocked Him upon the cross, "Father, forgive them," He uttered these terrible words about the sin that cannot be forgiven.

Wherein lay the wide difference between the two cases? Why was it that when the Scribes and Pharisees insulted Jesus, they blasphemed the Holy Ghost, while when the soldiers insulted Him they blasphemed the Son of Man? In answering these questions we shall find the thread of interpretation of which we are in search.

The sin against the Son of Man differs from the sin against the Holy Ghost in this, that it may be, and often is, a sin of ignorance. You remember the plea upon which Christ rested his intercession for his murderers, "They know not what they do."

The sin of the Pharisees was of a wholly different sort. They did know what they did. An act of undoubted beneficence had been openly exhibited before their eyes. No one could deny that in the healing of the demoniac a good deed had been done; and yet these men, rather than yield a point where their own pride was concerned, were willing to trace the goodness to a bad source.

Again, look at the difference between the two sets of men in respect to the advantages they had enjoyed in the way of knowing the truth. The soldiers at the cross were hirelings detailed by their superior officer to do a certain task. They were obeying orders, cruel orders, no doubt, but still orders not unlike what they had many times before received and executed. Had

any one protested, they would have replied, in their rough way, that they were doing their duty. They blasphemed against the Son of Man, and the Son of Man prayed for them, that the blasphemy of which in their partial ignorance they had been guilty might be forgiven them. But the Scribes and Pharisees, who said of Christ that He had an unclean spirit, were men who sat in Moses' seat. They were charged with the religious teaching of the people of God. If there were any persons then living in the world who might have been expected to recognize the hand of God when it was manifested, they were the men. They sinned against the best light that yet had shined. Their sin was therefore something other and worse than an insult paid to Jesus of Nazareth; it was a revolt against Him whose honor the Son of Man held dearer than his own, even the Spirit of truth.

But, after all, we need not go back so far in order to find illustrations of the difference between the two kinds of blasphemy. Perhaps it will be better for us to look and see whether in our own times there be not sins against the Son of Man and sins against the Holy Ghost.

The present century has witnessed a very singular alliance between unbelief and Christian morality. Men have renounced the Creed, and yet have tried to hold fast to the Beatitudes. It would lead us out of

our path were we to enter into a discussion of the causes that have brought about this state of things, but without any discussion, I think we shall agree that the state of things exists.

Very likely some of us could name among our own aquaintances persons whose lives exhibit many of the Christian graces, who are gentle, truth-loving, generous, but who nevertheless disown all obligation to the Lord Jesus Christ, and who would even say of Him words that might strike us as blasphemous. Will any one deny that there is a difference, define it as we may, between such persons and those who to their unbelief in the Saviour Himself, add unbelief in all He taught about man's duty towards his fellow-man? Of course there is a difference. These persons have, it is true, spoken against the Son of Man; they have not spoken against the Holy Ghost. The two sins are not to be classed together. Many a one has blasphemed the Son of Man who, had he known what he was doing, would have died rather than have spoken the word; like Saul he did it ignorantly, in unbelief. But it is the very characteristic of the sin against the Holy Ghost that it cannot be committed ignorantly, for what is it but the deliberate and conscious trampling under foot of goodness itself as such?

Take, for instance, the doings past and present of that more violent section of the communistic party,

which from time to time threatens the peace of Europe, and, more rarely, our own peace here at home. In spite of the crudities and follies that disfigure the action of these men, we cannot refuse to acknowledge that in the case of many of them, at least of some of them, there is an honest desire to better society, and carry out those principles of brotherhood and fellowship that actuated the disciples of the first age, of whom we read that they were so completely of one heart and of one mind that none of them called the things which he had "his own." These men rail at religion, scoff at all we account holy, and blaspheme Christ. But must we on that account unreservedly condemn them? Is it not just possible that they grossly misunderstand religion, and misconceive Christ? Let us be fair even to the men of the barricades. Such an exhortation may sound strange coming from a pulpit; and yet in the midst of the violence that every now and then manifests itself against churches and creeds, only God can tell how much is blasphemy against the Son of Man, a sin that can be forgiven, and how much blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, a sin which hath never forgiveness. The solemn question for us of the Church to ask ourselves, is whether we do not by our own inconsistencies, and our own tardiness in carrying out our alleged gospel of peace on earth and good-will to men, drive those

who are without into that very attitude of alienation from and hostility towards Christ, from which it is so hard to recover them.

And now, no matter how widely I may seem to depart from the consecutive line of thought we have been following, I cannot leave this subject without one word of reassurance to those who in times past may have been oppressed with the terrible misgiving that possibly the language of the text applies to them. I say I want to speak a word of reassurance, because those who are troubled at the thought of having gone too far to hope for forgiveness are the very ones whom it is least likely that our Lord's saying was meant to touch. There is little trouble of this sort—would that there were !—with those who have actually blasphemed the Holy Ghost. They do not care for pardon, that is the worst feature of their condition. The very intensity of the grief that tender consciences sometimes feel at the thought of having committed the unpardonable sin, is the best proof that they cannot have committed it. Wherever there is genuine sorrow for sin, be the sin what it may, wherever there is genuine sorrow for it, there in that heart is the Holy Ghost; by no possibility can He have taken flight.

Pray we on this day that the heavenly Dove may hover over all of us. We need the grace that is shed down from his pure wings to bless and help us.

Without Him our lives cannot be anything but sad and dark. With Him they will be beautiful and full of peace. He has been sent that He may abide with us a friend for ever. To you who have long known his presence, and to you who are just becoming conscious of his approach, I have one and the same word: Grieve Him not away.

SERMON V.

"THE SCORN OF SCORN."

"*Surely he scorneth the scorners.*"—PROV. iii. 34.

BUT how can one feel a scorn of scorn without himself coming into the same condemnation? And when we venture to say of God, as this proverbialist does, that he "scorneth the scorners," do we not seem to charge upon the Judge the identical fault for which He Himself is passing sentence upon the offender? In a word, if the Almighty does indeed scorn the scorner, must He not, from the very necessity of the case, incur self-scorn? The answer to these questions lies here. Feelings, like actions, derive their moral character to a great extent from circumstances. Before we pronounce confidently upon the rightness or the wrongness of what a man has done, we are bound to take, and we always do take, either consciously or unconsciously, many things into the account. "Thou shalt not kill," for example, is a part of the law of God, but "Whoso sheddeth man's blood,

by man shall his blood be shed," is also a part of the law of God. What is sin, therefore, under ordinary circumstances, is, in the special case of the executioner, innocence.

It seems to be a necessary feature of the law of retribution that like should be punished by like; so that this scorning of the scorner comes under the same head as the slaying of the slayer. And yet it is not every one who may slay the slayer, it is only the appointed one; neither is it every one who may scorn the scorner, but He blamelessly may who is the Judge of all the earth. And what more appropriate punishment can we conceive for the man who, in one way or another, has lorded it over his fellow-creatures for a life-time, than that he should be made to appreciate at last his own infinite littleness and meanness in the eye of Almighty God? "Surely He scorneth the scorners," and in perfect holiness He does it.

But my wish is to give the subject a treatment wholly practical, and not at all speculative. Out of what sort of soil springs up this weed of scorn? And through what negligence of ours is it suffered to get its growth, choking the good seed, and spoiling the whole fruitage of the soul? The temptation to be scornful is a universal one; the best of hearts feel it at times, and the worst hearts feel it all the time. Let us look at it critically for a few

minutes, as if it were a disease, and try to find out, by a study of the symptoms, something at least of the causes from which the symptoms spring. One of the most frequent, certainly the most vulgar, of all the varieties of scorn, is that which associates itself with the possession of money. Men are tempted by the multitude of the things which they possess to look disdainfully on those who possess nothing, or only a little. It is true that this feeling is often, very often, imagined to exist in hearts where it has really no place. Over and over again, men and women are assumed by their neighbors to be full of scornful thoughts simply on the ground of their being well to do in a worldly way, when really nothing could be further from the truth. A too quick sensitiveness to the estimate in which other people are supposed to hold us, may easily breed a suspicion of scorn on their part, where no scorn is. But making all due allowance for this liability, we must still acknowledge that the danger wealth incurs of growing scornful through excess of confidence in things is an actual, not an imaginary peril. "Our soul," exclaims one of the psalmists sadly, as if speaking out of the depths of a bitter experience, "is filled with the scornful reproof of the wealthy." Those words date from afar past. It is some three thousand years since they were spoken, but probably they had as little of

the air of novelty about them then as they have now. It is an old truth.

But there is a sort of power antecedent even to the money power, and perhaps for that reason I ought to have spoken of it first. I mean bodily superiority. The possession of physical strength has from the beginning been everywhere an incentive to scorn. How much of the unhappiness of human life in the past has been chargeable upon disdain, bred of a superiority purely and merely muscular and corporal, we shall never know. Among savage races, where the struggle for survival is plainly seen to be everything, this tyranny of the stronger arm is, of course, more noticeable than in the midst of people called civilized. But the pride of life, yes, of downright animal life, is by no means a stranger even to enlightened society; as a hundred indications from the popular worship of the prize-fighter upwards, even as far as the councils of nations, amply testify.

Pity can sting like a barbed arrow sometimes, and the weaklings know it. The man who falls out of the ranks faint or footsore must comfort himself as best he can. It is cold cheer he gathers from the good-by of rank and file as the column marches on. He was too feeble to keep up, that is all there is to be said about it, and yet he was, and is, a man, and has a man's sensitiveness.

Along with strength of limb we reckon the advantage which those who are engaged in competition gain from a firm foothold, good standing-ground. Hence it happens that official station, high place, the holding of civil or military authority, has been known to engender scornfulness. Under a system of government like our own, where the people make and unmake their rulers almost at pleasure, this evil is perhaps reduced to a minimum; but, if we take the whole world into account, as in such a survey of causes as this upon which we are engaged it is our duty to do, it will be found that the possession of authority too often begets in ungenerous natures a petty love of tyranny.

In his catalogue of the ills and crosses in the human lot that make men ready to lay down a discouraged life, the great dramatist does not forget

> "The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The insolence of office."

And as with strength and power, so with beauty. Unsanctified beauty is proverbially scornful. In ancient times, the ill-made dwarf seems to have been given his place in kings' palaces for the very sake of heightening, by force of contrast, the shapeliness of those among whom he crept and jested. The fact that graciousness of manner is always thought to add

so great a charm to personal beauty, testifies of itself to our not naturally expecting to find the two things combined. Imperiousness is commonly submitted to as one of the supposed prerogatives, or inherent rights of beauty. Even while reckoning it a drawback, we consent to it as a natural thing, and sometimes, it is even foolishly accounted no drawback, is actually commended as "hauteur." Nevertheless, it is written in a certain place, that "the Lord hateth a proud look."

A consciousness of superior knowledge, or knowledge supposed to be superior, often carries with it the assumption of scorn. There are always before our eyes conspicuous instances of great learning combined with profound humility. Thank God, the succession of lowly-minded scholars has never wholly failed since knowledge began to be. And yet the affectation of omniscience on the part of speakers and writers is far more frequent than could be wished. Learning patronizes sanctity. We are reminded with offensive condescension that it is the business of the wise to correct the mistakes of the good; and sometimes it would seem as if religion itself were only allowed to exist through the easy acquiescence of those who themselves have grown too well-informed to need any religion. It was one of the trials of the most patient

of men that he was allowed to become the object of this intellectual scorn. But he answered his persecutors in kind. "No doubt," he said, "but ye are the people, and wisdom will die with you."

Yet again, there is such a thing, though the phrase has a strange sound, as spiritual scorn. Contempt for those held to be theologically or ecclesiastically below the mark, a certain pitiless disdain for the class whom St. Paul so tenderly speaks of, "the weak in the faith," has too often found utterance and illustration in the history of the people of God. This temper was never more strikingly exemplified than in a well-remembered question recorded in one of the gospels, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" and the accompanying comment,—"This people who knoweth not the law are cursed."

So then, these are the motive springs, the sources and the suggestions of scorn; wealth, power of place, bodily strength, personal beauty, vigor of intellect, spiritual pride; were we to add a seventh, it might be wit, though this properly enough comes under the head of mental quickness, of which it is but one variety, for we reckon it among the children of the brain.

With thus much of knowledge attained as to the origin of the complaint, suppose we go on now to con-

sider some of the best accredited remedies for scorn. And by remedies for scorn do not understand me to intend means and methods of warding off from ourselves the scorn of others, for that is not at all what I would suggest. The thing we really need to be told is how to seal up the fountain of scorn in our own hearts, how to escape calling down upon our own heads the curse denounced against the scorner.

One of these remedies is to consider often and seriously the littleness, the real, the intrinsic smallness of the possession, gift, privilege, whichever it may be, upon which we are pluming ourselves, and from which we draw the justification of our scornful thoughts. Your wealth is tempting you to entertain a certain disdain for those less rich than yourself, is it? Consider, I pray you, what your riches really are. A great landed estate, perhaps, an inherited homestead, or something of that sort. Very well, it does look large, this possession of yours, as compared with what your neighbor owns. But how small, how tiny it appears, when you contrast it with the unclaimed, unsurveyed territory that belongs to Almighty God. It is the merest speck upon the surface of the earth, this valuable farm, this highly taxed square, this precious piece of property,—the merest speck, and this earth, in its turn, is but a speck among the never counted worlds that strew the pathways of the

universe like dust. And yet, on account of it, on account of this mote, this microscopic bit of earth, this atom, you are consenting to let an unwholesome element enter into, tinge and taint the whole atmosphere of your soul; you are willing to be scornful. I have used landed possessions as a means of illustrating my point, but any other form of material riches would have answered the purpose just as well. What is true of acres, is also true of houses and furniture, equipages, dress, ornament and all the rest. One of the English mystics speaks of his having found it an effectual mode of disabusing himself of the illusions of wealth, to imagine all his property turned into some one form of merchandise, and then asking himself, How am I the better or the happier for being the legal owner of a hundred thousand pieces of such or such a mineral, or half a million boxes or two million bales of such or such a fabric? The device is perhaps a clumsy one, for in real life wealth seldom or never does lock itself up in the monotonous and unattractive way supposed; at least, that is not the form in which we see it. Still the suggestion has something of value in it, for it does fasten the attention upon the coarse, material side of all accumulated riches, and does remind us how insignificant the thing called a fortune really is as compared with the earth and the fulness thereof. That mighty One who

made and owns the world, scorneth the scorners, and assuredly on this score of great possessions, He has a right to do so, for it is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.

So much for the littleness of wealth at its greatest, but when we go on to take into account the transiency of it as well as the littleness, we see at once what an utterly groundless justification riches furnish for the exercise of scorn. Wealth may be lost at any time, and must be parted with some time. "We brought nothing into this world," so runs the burial sentence, "and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Once separated from your property, and finding yourself all alone with your scorn, how very, very poorly off you will be! how very, very lonely!

But if the case be thus with riches, (and I have used riches merely as one illustration of a point that might have been variously illustrated), is it any the better with those other things of which we were speaking—bodily strength and personal beauty, the pride of power and the pride of intellect, and the pride of Churchly privilege? No, they are transient all. If riches have wings, so have they. There is but one thing of which it is said that the world cannot take it away from those who have it, and that is the peace of God.

But there is a nobler, loftier thought than this, and one even more efficacious as a protection against the growth in us of the scornful mood, and that is th thought that all of these various possessions are given us in trust. I call this a nobler thought than the other, because there seems to be in it so much more that is fitted to stimulate high purpose and generous effort. The mere blank contemplation of the transitoriness and perishableness of all things earthly and human, is, perhaps, more likely to have a bad effect upon us than it is to do us good. It may, on the one hand, tempt us to frivolity, by whispering the godless suggestion, "Life is a breath; it will be over soon; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" or again, it may drive us into that cynical and bitter mood which can see no good in any thing, and of which the logical, even if not the most frequent outcome is self-destruction by the easiest and quickest way.

But if we can only rise to that conception of our life which acknowledges it to be, with all its powers and talents and privileges and opportunities, nothing less than a weighty trust committed to us by Almighty God, the Maker of our bodies and the Father of our spirits, if we can but do this, we shall be guarded alike from frivolity, from despondency and from scorn We cannot be frivolous, for no matter how swift the trust, we see the solemnity of it; we cannot be de-

spondent, for the responsibility laid on us is, by its very nature, prophetic of more than heart can wish or tongue utter; we cannot be scornful, for there is nothing in a lent possession that tends to foster the vanity of ownership.

But the best of all the antidotes to scorn is the contemplation, honest, earnest, and sustained, of the example of our Saviour Christ. If superiority of any kind whatsoever could confer the right to be contemptuous, surely that right was his. Among the sons of men, He holds a primacy which is beyond dispute. Even those who are offended at the assertion of the Godhead, allow as much as this. By common consent, his name stands first on the roll of history, his appearance here counts as the greatest of all the births of time.

If, therefore, any conqueror in virtue of his prowess, or any thinker in virtue of his thought, or any monarch in virtue of his royalty, has ever earned the prerogative of disdain, ever reached that point of eminence where scorn of others is justifiable and fit, He is the one. But what saith He of Himself, this King of kings, this Lord of lords, this Bishop of all pastors, and High Priest of the great family of man, what saith He of Himself? "I am meek," He says, "and lowly in heart." Yes, friends, that is it; there lies the hiding of his power. There is no dash or

touch or tinge of scorn to mar the perfect sweetness of his nature. Gracious He is, and clement, reassuring our timidity by the loving kindness of his smile, and through the pitifulness of his great mercy loosing those who are tied and bound by sin.

Dear friends, if our religion means anything at all, means it not this, that a Christian's duty is the imitating of Christ? And are we imitators of Him, if knowingly we go on letting the scornful temper rule our hearts in place of pity? There is a hard, unloving mood of mind into which people sometimes allow themselves to fall as a sort of revenge upon their own ill success. Embittered by losses or failure, thwarted, disappointed, hurt, they seem to find a certain bleak and ghastly consolation in noticing the like drawbacks in lives other than their own. But this is not to imitate Christ. He lost everything. "Then they all forsook Him and fled." And yet some of the gentlest, tenderest, most pitiful of his sayings are to be found among the words spoken from the cross. We have not far to go in search of opportunities to cultivate and put in use this Christlike temper; every day we live brings occasions to our door. The relation of parent to child, teacher to scholar, employer to employed is continually furnishing a field for the play of this form of charity. In the family prayers of the late Dean Alford of Canterbury, himself an eminent

exemplar of kindliness and forbearance, there is a beautiful petition, which, if granted, would bring gladness into many a home to which now it is a stranger: "From forgetting or not caring for one another's infirmities," so the supplication runs, "Good Lord, deliver us." The forgetting is the evil that comes from want of thought; the not caring, the evil that comes of want of heart, and how sore is our need of deliverance from both of them! Compassed about as we all of us are with infirmity of one sort or another, infirmity of body, it may be, the very existence of which is unsuspected, perhaps, by those about us; or infirmity of spirit; or infirmity of body and of spirit; how ill we can afford to be contemptuous! how poorly scorn becomes us! This is the true lesson of the parable of the unmerciful servant. He was hard upon his fellow-servant, and loud with his "Pay me that thou owest," and then he wondered that his master repented having forgiven him his own so much greater debt. "O thou wicked servant!" was the comment when all the truth came to be known.

We have our choice between ridiculing the weak points of those around us, and being sorry for them; between doing what we can to make the faults and the misfortunes of others conspicuous, and doing what we can to hide them out of sight; in a word, between mercilessness and mercy, between contempt and pity.

It will be prudent of us, putting it on the lowest ground; wise of us, putting it upon the highest, so to decide the alternative, that when at last the end comes, as come it must, we shall have no cause to dread the searching glance of Him who "scorneth the scorners."

SERMON VI.

GOD'S SILENCE.

" . . . *hold not thy peace at my tears.*"—PSALM XXXIX. 12.

WHAT a natural prayer! It is the protest of man's heart against God's silence. Does He pity me? the sufferer asks, Does He really pity me? If yes, why then can He not tell me so? why this apparent indifference, this refusal to respond? "Hear my prayer, O, Lord. Give ear unto my cry. Hold not thy peace at my tears." Nothing, I say again, could be more natural.

The demand for response is a thing instinctive in us, native to our feelings. We are so made that when any emotion is stirred in the heart, and breaks out into expression, there must be answer or we suffer. The very mechanism of Nature seems to have been planned with reference to this spiritual fact, and, as it were, in illustration of it. Motion has its rebound, light its reflection, sound its echo. In each case, there comes in, you observe, this principle of the answer.

The smooth lake, appealed to by the over-arching sky, gives back the image, cloud for cloud, and blue for blue. The mountain heights return the voice that seeks them, doubled and redoubled. Deep calleth unto deep, and deep unto deep replies. Nature may be, and, as we have too good reason to know, is, upon the highest topics, dumb to man, but to herself she is vocal. Action and reaction, play and counter-play, are the very groundwork of her being.

When now we pass over the invisible line that marks off the confines of external Nature from those of human nature, and open our eyes upon the field of our own inner experience, what do we see? We see everywhere the same need of, the same demand for the response; but we do not everywhere see the need satisfied, or the demand met. On the contrary, appeal upon appeal, cry after cry, go out upon the air and there comes nothing back. And yet the call for response is as real a thing as anything in us. Not to speak, just now, of the more personal relations of life, and the place which this principle holds towards them, consider in how many public ways the demand for response asserts itself. What can the orator do with the unresponsive audience? He may be able to struggle through the sentences he has prepared himself to utter, but if it is plain to him as he goes along that what he says is nowhere calling forth assent on

the part of the listeners, he is half-paralyzed. The sense of duty to his cause may carry him through to the end of his argument or plea, but he moves forward with a heavy heart, fettered, clogged. How is it that we use one and the same word, "cheer," for an audible cry of encouragement and an inward sense of being encouraged? It is because the two things are so intimately connected that it is hard to sever them even in thought. The man you cheer is cheered not only through the ear but in the heart.

Liturgical worship, as an institution, may be said to rest upon this same principle. The power of that method of divine service resides in the prominence which it gives to the answer as a supplement to the appeal. A recognition of the mutual interest that lies between minister and people in the act of worship is what makes The Book of Common Prayer the thing it is. "Lift up your hearts," that is well, but how much better to have the reply come back, full and strong, "We lift them up unto the Lord." "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God;" a gracious invitation of itself, but the graciousness is confirmed by the reply, "It is meet and right so to do." "The Lord be with you," says the priest to the people. He can kneel down to pray with a better heart when they have answered cheeringly, "And with thy spirit."

These are but detached illustrations of the general principle that there is rooted in human nature a craving for response. Other instances might be cited in abundance, but there is no need of them. It is plain enough already that in our relations to one another as fellow-creatures, what the author of the Proverbs says about it is perfectly true, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

The question arises has man a right to demand, or to expect, from his Maker the responsiveness which he instinctively looks for from his brother man? May he, without impiety or presumption, exclaim with our Psalmist in the text, "Hold not thy peace at my tears." To this question, and to certain others which we shall find easily springing out of it, I invite your further thought.

First, then, is it a reasonable expectation on our part that God should take notice of our sorrows and our griefs, and in some way speak to us about them?

The Bible warrants me in answering, Yes, the expectation is a reasonable one. It is the teaching of the Christian religion that whatever there is in man that is good is also in God, and more besides. This is a general inference from the declaration that man was made in the image of God. The image, we must remember, is never precisely the same thing as the object imaged. The original has many characteris-

tics which the image has not. But still the image has resemblance, even though it have not identity. If it had not resemblance, it would not be the image. Hence when we find in the works of Nature certain laws of number and proportion accurately followed; when we discover by chemical process that the same substances always combine according to the same fixed weights; when Botany has shown us that the stalks and leaves of a plant are arranged in a carefully adjusted numerical order, we infer that a mind not unlike our own minds in its general characteristics must have planned and calculated such results. I am aware that this form of argument has been impugned; it has not been, and cannot be invalidated. It is evident that the creative mind, whose methods we thus search out, must be in possession of powers to an indefinite extent superior to our own, but it is equally evident that they are powers similar in kind to those that enable us, in our small way, to compute and reckon, to divide and to compare. An Indian, fresh from the wilderness, though he may never have seen in all his life a dwelling any more elaborate than his own tent of skins or hut of bark, is not for a moment perplexed by the great buildings which line the city streets. They fill him with astonishment, no doubt, but he instantly infers from a mere glance that the skill which brought them into existence was similar in

kind to that which made the humbler structures of his own rude village. He knows that every house is builded by some man. We do but reason as he reasons when we insist, that because the universe, when studied, discloses thoughts like our thoughts, it must have proceeded from an intelligence akin to ours, even though immeasurably above ours.

Apply this same reasoning to the facts of the spiritual universe, and what have we as a result? Take the sentiment of pity, that compassionate feeling which strength may entertain towards weakness. It may not be possible to define it satisfactorily in words, but we all know what it is, and we know also that it is found most fully developed as a characteristic in the noblest natures. As we ascend the scale of humanity we find compassion more and more brought into prominence, until, when we have reached your very best man of all, we find that he is also the most compassionate of all. But why stop at this point? Why make the noblest man you can imagine the supreme illustration of this grace? God is above man, for God made man, and must of necessity, therefore, be man's superior. And shall we suppose that compassion ceases to be possible after we have soared up above the level of man's being? Nay, ought we not to expect to find in man's Maker a larger, deeper,

broader, compassion than we found in our very noblest man?

There is an immense wealth of argument hidden in that question of the psalmist: "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" With equal emphasis we have a right to ask, He that formed man's heart so that it could be pitiful, shall not He pity? This seems to be reasonable enough, so reasonable, indeed, that we wonder why anything more should be needed to convince us of the goodness of God. With such a satisfactory argument in hand as this, why should we desire any special revelation. What call is there for a Christ? If the evidences of the working of an intelligent mind are sufficiently abundant in nature to persuade you that the God of Nature must be Himself intelligent and conscious, why is not the presence in man of the trait we call compassion, a proof equally persuasive that the God who made man and fashioned his heart is Himself compassionate? And yet it is the fact, as we well know, that many who never question the power of God are sometimes tempted to question the goodness of God. What is it that causes this difference? If the study of a bird's wing or an insect's eye suffices to satisfy me that intellect is enthroned at the centre of things, why does not the sight of some signal instance of compassion in the case of a fellow-man, convince me that loving-kindness is en-

throned there too? The Creator of bird and insect, is also the Creator of man. If we learn the lesson of his skill from the one, ought we not to learn the lesson of his love from the other?

And yet, whether we ought or not, as a matter of fact, we do not so learn the lesson of his love. The fact that we have it in our power to pity others, does not of itself suffice to convince us that God pities us. Why not? Because, and the reason carries us straight back to the text, because when we are sorry for one another, we are apt in some way to show it. Our pity may find most inadequate expression, but expression of some sort it does find, must find, insists on finding,—in a word, there is response. We have no occasion to say to one another, what this sufferer out of the depths of his anguish says almost bitterly to God, "Hold not thy peace at my tears." Just here, therefore, is where the stress of the difficulty comes. We find it easy to believe in the wisdom and the strength of the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, because nowhere in the whole wide range of his works visible do we discover anything that seriously militates against such a belief. And we find it hard to believe in the love of God, because human life is so full of things that do seem seriously to militate against such a belief, that do seem to make it improbable that God cares for us at all.

We do not hold our peace at the tears of others, when we honestly and sorely grieve for them. Why then should He hold his peace at our tears, if pity us He really does? Who that has felt the cold unresponsiveness of outward Nature at seasons of deep inward grief will refuse to see the force of this difficulty?

Superficial reasons for believing in the compassionateness of God suffice us in the time of our prosperity, but in the day of trouble we go down in search of some rock foundation on which t rest the structure of our hopes; the common-places of consolation fail to comfort; the anodynes that once sufficed to put the soul into a pleasant slumber upon occasion, seem to have lost virtue; the questioning spirit within us will not be hushed, save at the bidding of a voice which it has reason to believe is the clear, solemn voice of truth. We refuse to be comforted unless it be a real, a solid comfort that is brought for our acceptance. And in this we are right.

Is there then any way of satisfactorily accounting for the apparent dumbness of God's pity. Does He really, as it might seem that He does, hold his peace at our tears? Instead of directly answering these questions, I purpose to meet them indirectly by suggesting a few thoughts to be taken home and pondered by all whom this inquiry in any degree interests.

Here is one such suggestion. A voice in order to

be real, need not necessarily be an articulate voice, need not necessarily employ audible sounds. Of our various teachers there are few indeed that speak to us more effectively than the artists and the composers. They do it through the instrumentality of forms of speech peculiar to themselves. The picture or the statue may tell us much which we should find it hard to put into sentences if we were required to do so, and there are songs without words, that find their way to the heart as readily as if the words went with them, for, in fact, they are words of themselves.

So, then, let us not look to God for a sort of utterance He has never vouchsafed, unless by miracle, and let us be reconciled to the thought that if He is to speak to us, it will be in what must seem to all except ourselves the deepest silence. And, after all, why ought we to find it so very hard to look at the thing in this light? Even among ourselves it is not the most noisy demonstrations of sympathy that help us the most. As we distrust the genuineness and the depth of a garrulous sorrow, so do we discount the value of a wordy consolation. God's comforts are absolutely noiseless, that is clear, but that they are any the less sufficient for their purpose, on that account, is not clear. Unquestionably there does sometimes come to persons in affliction, when they take their sorrows patiently, a certain quietness of soul, a

calm tranquillity of which all about them take notice. Why is it not a reasonable inference, at least for a religious mind disposed to think the best rather than the worst things of God, why is it not a reasonable inference that this very stilling of the waves is the direct result of God's having spoken. We charge Him impatiently sometimes with holding his peace, when really the fact is that He has been bestowing his peace, and in doing so has spoken in the very truest and most satisfactory sense of all. Under the shadow of some weighty sorrow a group of friends sit silent in one another's presence. Shall we say of them that because their grief is speechless, therefore they are of no help to one another? Most assuredly, No. They are aware, in the midst of the stillness, of a comfort born of fellowship. They are together, that they know, and the knowing it is a support, a strength, a stay. Only let us be firmly persuaded that God is a reality, not a fancy or a dream, and that He is ever near at hand, so near that none could possibly be nearer, and the seeming silence of his voice will not distress us. Simply to know that He is with us and we with Him, will of itself be the guarantee of a quiet content. Satisfied that we are in his presence, we shall be as willing that He should speak to us in his way, as He is that we should speak to Him in ours. Do you tell me that the parallel fails, because in the case of the

friends their silent sitting in one another's presence is comforting and helpful wholly because at other times, and in other places, they have spoken often and much? And so, I answer, has God in the past spoken often and much, spoken more than once, and more than twice. Through the lips of holy prophets, since the world began, He has from time to time communicated to the human family messages of reassurance. How grandly they stand out from the pages of the Old Testament, those words of God which in dark and troublous times availed to keep alive in men's hearts the spark of hope! To be sure, they were not spoken to you or me individually, but we nevertheless have our lot and portion in them. They tell of a new heavens and a new earth, they foretell the day when God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces, they predict a triumph over the grave, and the swallowing up of death in victory. No one can rob us of our heritage in words like these; they have been spoken; they have never been taken back; they are the common property of all of us; and while they stand we have no valid reason for complaining that God holds his peace at our tears.

But I have kept the richest and most helpful suggestion till the last. CHRIST is really God's word of answer to those who turn to Him in trouble, all eagerness for his response. Baffled, disheartened,

afflicted, distressed, we look at Him, and faith is born afresh. The picture of the Christ, what an all-powerful word of God it is to those who will only look at it with earnest and patient gaze. The heavenly Father hold his peace at our tears? No, never say that, so long as there survives the record of a Sonship so perfect that it has made the Fatherhood a credible thing. Yes, the word that God cannot utter through the medium of nature's forms, he gives us in Jesus. Through Him He answers us. He must no longer be reckoned silent, unresponsive, dumb, now that He has spoken to us in a word like that, a word made flesh and sent among us for interpretation. Yes, Christ is the Father's message to us, clothed in the vesture of our own humanity. With what tenderness and graciousness, and at the same time with what a masterful touch does he sketch for us the true likeness of the divine majesty. Look at him as the Good Shepherd leading his flock in green pastures, and beside still waters! Look at him as the Man of Sorrows, a homeless pilgrim, a seeker of mountain solitudes, misunderstood, plotted against, spitefully entreated, cursed, mocked, and scourged! See how full of pity he is for all who sorrow and all who suffer! Watch his progress as he walks through the cities and towns of the land His footprints stamped with the name Holy! See mothers bring their children for his

touch of blessing, and friends their sick that He may heal them with his word! Watch Him when confronted with the dark reality of evil in the persons of those who sought his absolution! Mark the pitifulness of his great mercy in dealing with the penitent and contrite! See how He feels for sorrow, and at the grave of Lazarus groans in spirit over the wasting, desolating power of death! These three are the great ills of life: sin, disease and sorrow. We note his attitude towards each of them, and it is plainly that of pardoner, physician, consoler. If any word can be imagined more full of meaning than this Word made flesh, speak it out, and let us know what it is. Failing to do that, no longer think of God as one who will not answer, who holds his peace at tears, but trust Him, trust Him as your everlasting Friend.

SERMON VII.

FATALISM.

"*The sea is his, and he made it.*" —PSALM XCV. 5.

IF we study these words attentively we shall find in them, I think, something more than a bare historical statement—even a message of comfort and strength to the failing heart of man.

Israel was practically an inland people. Even in the days when the occupation of the Palestinian territory was most complete, the coast line of the Mediterranean remained, with trifling, if indeed with any, exceptions, in the hands of the original possessors.

Jacob's dying promise that Zebulon should dwell at the haven of the sea never found a satisfactory fulfilment. Solomon's conquests did indeed put the nation in possession of certain harbors on the Red Sea, but even he was obliged to depend on his Phenician neighbors to teach his own people seamanship in their joint expeditions to the East. Up to the time of David not one of the twelve tribes can be proved to have

possessed a single seaport town, and whatever knowledge the people acquired of maritime affairs must have come either as the result of occasional visits to the coast, or else from intercourse with such merchants as came inland from Tyre and Sidon for purposes of trade. As a natural consequence, the sea presented itself to the Hebrew mind chiefly under its attributes of terror. We always fear most that with which we are least familiar. So it was with the Israelites: they dreaded the sea as the very embodiment of fierceness, treachery and violence; and it has been noticed as an incidental illustration of this that when Moses was threatening the people with the terrible consequences that would ensue upon their neglect of his law, he ended by declaring that in the event of their disobedience the Lord would bring them into Egypt again with ships.

We look in vain to find in Hebrew poetry anything that answers to the passionate love of the sea, which is so conspicuous in the literature of our own tongue—the literature, be it remembered, of a seafaring race. Psalmist and prophet think of the ocean only with shrinking and horror. Job's strange question, "Am I a sea?" appears to mean, Am I so ungovernable, so rebellious, so wayward that I must needs be tamed and kept down by such tremendous discipline? Isaiah declares of the wicked that they

"are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." In David's ears the waves of the sea "rage horribly," he is afflicted with them; all God's billows, he avers, have gone over him, and his cry is "out of the depths." Even our Lord Himself, although as the Son of Man not subject to the limitations of any national modes of thought, does nevertheless frame his language in harmony with the popular feeling of the race to which, as the son of Mary, He belonged. When He is portraying the calamities of the last days, not the least vivid stroke in the awful picture is that sentence in which He speaks of "the distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear." And better, He warns them, as if choosing out the very illustration that would tell most powerfully on the fears of his listeners, better for him who offends one of his little ones that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were "drowned in the depths of the sea."

If, in order to obtain a complete estimate of what we may call the feeling of the Scriptures upon this point, we carry on our enquiry from the Gospels to the other books of the New Testament, we shall find that the same tone is consistently held throughout. When the sea is named, it is as an object of either fear or hate. St. James can find nothing to which to liken

the fickle and unstable man so appropriate as the wave that is driven with the wind, and tossed; and for the enemies of the faith St. Jude has no worse censure than to name them "raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame."

Can we wonder, after this, to find the seer of the Apocalypse, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, declaring it as one of the crowning glories of the new heavens and the new earth, that then "there shall be no more sea"?

We come back to the text with minds prepared to appreciate at least a portion of the force of it. It was no trifling exercise of faith by dint of which David was able to say, "The sea is his, and He made it." The words were a protest, needed now quite as much as it was needed then, against materialism. You think, perhaps, that it was an easy thing to worship Jehovah in those old days of miracle, and prophecy and direct vision. Those were simple times, you say; men were childlike, and found it easy to believe. People so long ago as that knew nothing about the rigidity of the laws of Nature, and nothing stood in the way of supposing that God could answer prayer. Thought had not hardened into system, and observation had not begotten science, and altogether the veils were thinner that separated the seen from the unseen, the worshipper from the throne.

Not so. The great God has not been thus partial in his treatment of the generations of his children. There never has been a time since the gates of Paradise were shut, when it has been easy to be devout, easy to find and to walk with Him, easy to behold the Lord Jehovah, high and lifted up, enthroned a King for ever over all his works. Nature-worship has always been, will always be, to the end of time, the most dangerous snare of the human mind. The Hebrew people, taught by their prophets and their Scriptures, worshipped a God who was above Nature. We say this was their glory. Yes, but how little we appreciate the struggle it cost them to cling to this unearthly faith! All about them were nations, in some respects more highly civilized than themselves, who laughed at their narrow prejudice in favor of one only God. Southwards were the Egyptians, deeply versed, as they themselves were not, in astronomy, in metallurgy, in architecture, in philosophy; and these Egyptians worshipped Nature impersonated in beast, and bird, and insect. Westward were the Phenicians, the great commercial people of the ancient world, men of enterprise and large experience in affairs, wealthy and magnificent, envied of all their neighbors, and these Phenicians worshipped Nature, symbolized to their minds by the sun, the moon and the five planets. Think you it was anything but ter-

ribly hard to resist such influences as these? Think you no one was laughed at in those days for believing in the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, even as some are laughed at for believing in Him now? Again and again, kings fell before the temptation, conspicuously Solomon, the greatest of them all, and more than once the bulk of the people became apostate, too. Depend upon it, courage was needed for a psalmist to sing in the very hearing, perhaps, of men who sacrificed to the net, and burned incense to the drag, "The sea is his, and He made it."

But not courage only; the doctrine demanded, alike in him who taught and in him who received it, faith. To realize that there was sitting above the floods a King able to lay the beams of his chambers on their unstable floor, and yet hold the structure firm, this called for a heart strong to believe. There were thousands willing to make of the sea a god; even the Nile and the Ganges had their worshippers; but the conception of a deity who could measure all these waters in the hollow of his hand, one of whom it might be affirmed that the sea was his, because his workmanship,—this was a thought quite beyond the power of the unenlightened human mind to entertain. The machinery of Nature is terribly strong. Whatever ventures too near, is drawn in among the wheels, and perishes.

The words of the text meant all this to him who first uttered them; to us they may mean even more. The unfamiliar sea frightened the Israelites, by suggesting thoughts of personal danger, of bodily injury. The fearful perils to be encountered by those whose business is in the great waters, the tempests, the sunken rocks, the violence of enemies, all these possibilities started up in the Hebrew mind at the mention of the sea with a vividness at which our better protected civilization can afford to smile. But there are other influences of terror exercised by the sea, even over those who are most familiar with its moods—influences which no improvements in the art of navigation, no enlarged knowledge of soundings and harbors, tides and currents, will ever alter or weaken. The ocean is, and always will be, so long as man keeps the faculty of imagination, a mournfully suggestive parable of human life. The restlessness of the sea, its constant alternations of storm and calm, its treachery, for ever deceiving us by false appearances, the atmosphere of mystery that broods over it, all these contribute to make it the natural symbol of man's condition here in this world. This seems a sombre, nay, a gloomy reflection; but be patient with it a few moments, and possibly light may dawn on our darkness.

Take only one of those characteristics which I

just now mentioned as belonging alike to the ocean and to our present life, mysteriousness. David had been visited by this thought also. "Thy judgments," he says, while pondering the strange confusion of good and evil in the world, "are like the great deep." The sea does suggest, with wonderful power, the mysteriousness of God's providence in the affairs of men. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Man is haunted, it is useless to deny it, man is for ever haunted by the spectre of destiny. I do not mean, of course, that every man is so troubled —God forbid. I use the word "man" in its broad and general sense. Change the expression, if you please, and say that the human mind is by nature prone to the misgiving that fate rather than providence orders the procession of our life. Events, so the temptation whispers, fall out according to an iron law of necessity. There is no loving Father who notes the sparrow's fall, and gives his children their daily bread; neither is there any blessed consummation, any final victory of the good over the evil towards which history may be supposed to move. These hopes are delusive; they rest on no foundation. The only thing of which we are certain is that effect follows upon cause in uniform succession, any given human life being as powerless to quicken, or

retard, or alter the movement of this endless chain, as if it were only a tiny bubble molten in the fibre of the iron of one single link.

This is what we understand by such words as "destiny," "fate," "necessity," and this is the idea which the sea, looked at as a parable, most easily suggests.

You sit upon some rocky promontory and watch the incoming tide. You note how wave after wave dashes itself against the hard face of the cliff, and perishes in the act. You observe that every now and then a larger wave comes in, and seems to make a braver effort; but that also, like its predecessor, falls back and is gone. Meanwhile the general level of the water rises and rises, until a predetermined point is reached, and then, as gradually, the tide recedes, sure to return again as soon as a few hours have past, and to make its mark a little higher, or a little lower, according to rules which the astronomers wrote out long ago, which you might have found all calculated for you in their books before you started on the walk. Surely, if there be anywhere in Nature a vivid emblem of the idea of destiny, it is here. And, if anything were needed to heighten the impression which the eye has already carried to the mind, the ear might find it in the monotonous, melancholy music of the breaking

waves, a sound which possibly suggested to the mourner among the prophets his pathetic cry, "There is sorrow on the sea."

What is the relief for a mind oppressed, weighted down with thoughts like this? The text points us in the right direction. "The sea is his, and He made it." "Have faith in God," said our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples, when they found themselves in perplexity. Have faith in God. He who made the sea is greater than the sea. He who ordained the strangely tangled scheme of Providence, is greater than his scheme. He who is responsible for the mystery of human life, holds the key of that mystery in his hands. That which frightens us under the name of destiny is only a mask; faith tears it off and finds the loving features of a personal God, a true Father in heaven behind. Have faith in God. His judgments are a great deep; but He is in the depth as well as in the height. "The sea is his, and He made it."

"Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all his words most wonderful,
Most sure in all his ways."

Do you ask for proof of this? There is no proof. If there were proof, Christ need not have said, "Have faith in God." Where knowledge leaves off,

there faith begins. At the outer boundary of demonstration, belief lifts up her voice and sings. Do you say, convince me that the idea of destiny is false, and that the idea of providence is true? No, I cannot convince, I can only, by God's help, persuade you; and yet, when once persuaded, you will be as certain as if you had been convinced; for what a man believes with all his heart, he holds as firmly as he does that which he knows with all his mind. "We know," says St. Paul, grandly asserting his faith in a doctrine the opposite of destiny, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." How did he know this? Had it been proved to him by strict processes of reasoning in which his keen intellect had been able to detect no flaw? Was that the ground of the confidence with which he spoke? Far from it. The foundation of his certainty was what he elsewhere calls the "assurance of faith."

And who is the teacher of this glad faith? To whom shall we go that we may learn to believe that God is love? I know not, if not to Him who, standing once upon the deck of a tempest-tossed ship, rebuked the wind, and said unto this same sea, "Peace be still." He spoke as one having authority. The sea was his, for He had made it, and it was his right to govern the work of his own hands. Do you remember the first question He asked his frightened

disciples after the storm was stilled? "He said unto them, Where is your faith?" My fellow believers, can we not imagine his saying it to us also, at moments when we find ourselves thinking more about the sea than about Him who made the sea?

Did not He, the Redeemer, come into this world, and take our nature upon Him, and suffer death upon the cross, for the very purpose of freeing men from the bondage of their fears, for the very purpose of breaking up this evil dream of destiny and enfranchising us with the liberty of the sons of God? Has He not made for us, as for Israel of old, a pathway through the dreaded sea, and having overcome the sharpness of death, has He not opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers? Well may He ask, Where is your faith? One who has done so much for us has at least the right to expect that we shall trust Him; having at so great a cost purchased us this freedom, He has at least the right to expect that we shall be thankful for it, and use it as his gift.

And yet how few are thankful for his gift, how few take the trouble to accept it! Men will turn to almost any helper sooner than to Jesus, and, for the most part, not until all the other helpers have failed do they bethink themselves of Him. But He is very patient. He is willing to wait. He knows what the false Christs and the false prophets have to tell, and

about how long they will be in the telling it. And when, at last, the soul, baffled and discouraged in its search for peace, does come and beg it at his hands, He stands ready, with his arms stretched out, and with the blessing on his lips.

Do I seem to have wandered from my text? We are not very far away from it. Forget this Jesus of whom I have been speaking, forget his words, his acts, above all, his rising from the dead, and presently you will hear again the sad music of the waves, while the depth saith, "It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not with me. But the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them his covenant."

SERMON VIII.

THE REASONABLENESS OF PRAYER.

"*He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?*"—PSALM xciv. 9.

OUR subject, I need scarcely say, is to be Prayer; or, to speak more definitely, prayer looked at in the light of its naturalness and reasonableness. The general topic of prayer admits of a large variety of treatments. We might consider, if we chose, the methods of prayer, whether it ought to be offered in set forms or without them; the places of prayer, whether there be virtue in consecrated buildings or not; the times and seasons of prayer; or, again, the varieties of prayer, classified according to its character as penitential, eucharistic, intercessory and the like. All this might make for edification in the case of people already thoroughly convinced of the possibility of prayer, and needing only to have the nature and function of it unfolded to them. But suppose the misgiving has crept into the soul, one scarcely knows how or whence, Is there any use in praying? Clear-

ly, from that moment, the solitary question of real interest is not, How shall I pray? nor Where shall I pray? nor When shall I pray? but this, Can I pray? It is to this one question, lying back of all the rest, that I shall try to fasten your thought. This answered, the others, instead of losing interest, will gain it immensely; but this unanswered, the others are of no moment, futile and purposeless. It need not disturb us to be reminded that the author of our text was thinking, when he wrote, of a matter quite distinct from prayer. His immediate concern, in this Ninety-fourth Psalm, is the general question of God's moral government of the world. His heart is full of burning indignation against the evil-doers; the spectacle of the cruelties and injustices that make up so much of human life has kindled his righteous anger, and his cry is, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth, render a reward to the proud." Then there starts up in his mind the thought that there are people who say that all this is impossible, who deny that any account is taken in heaven of what happens on the earth, who slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless, quieting their consciences all the while by repeating, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Now, how am I to

meet this brutish and brutal argument? the Psalmist says to himself; and in a moment to himself replies, I will meet it in this way, by a simple appeal to common sense: these men have eyes and ears of their own; surely they must admit that they cannot have come by them without the intervention of an artificer. Whatever shows the marks of contrivance indicates a contriver, and wherever we find mechanism, we must of necessity allow the mechanician. Such marvellous creations as eye and ear tell of a Creator. You fancy that you are doing these iniquities unseen, you please yourselves with the notion that you are telling these lies unheard; but stop a moment, pause and think; your own eyes and ears rebuke you. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? and He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" Now if this be, as it is, a good argument in favor of the existence of a discerning and controlling Providence, doubly is it an argument in favor of the possibility of prayer; for the conclusion God can and does hear, is one step nearer to the Psalmist's question than the conclusion which he is persuading us to draw, namely, that God can and will punish the wrong-doer.

So then, without further delay, let us grapple this question of the reasonableness of prayer.

Can God listen to and answer prayer? Will God listen to and answer prayer? Ought God to listen

to and answer prayer? Three points, you notice, are involved—ability, disposition, right. Take the first of these, the ability. Do our petitions, as a matter of fact, reach the throne, or is it more likely that they die away upon the air, never get beyond wall or roof; or, if spoken out of doors, go no further heavenward than the carrying power of the speaker's voice avails to press them? Doubts of this sort might perplex us, fairly enough, were we tied to the child's notion of a God only to be really found by going up and up and up in space. But this is not the true Christian conception of the mode of the divine presence. The King of heaven is indeed what one of the prophets has called Him—a God that hideth Himself—but his hiding-place is close at hand, not far away. The spoken prayer has not to traverse a distance that can be measured by rod or chain before reaching its destination. Even the heathen, for all their dimness of spiritual vision, seem to have had some perception of this truth. Smoke was their chosen symbol of prayer. Sometimes it went up from the burning sacrifice upon the altar, sometimes from the swinging censer; but whether the savor that it carried was that of the flesh of beasts or of sweet incense, they had the satisfaction of watching it melt away into nothingness. It has gone out of the world visible, they said, this offering of ours, it has

gone out of the world visible into the world invisible, and has reached the waiting God for whom we meant it. My friends, we shall pay dearly for our more accurate knowledge of the destination of the fading smoke and the vanishing vapor, if we let ourselves be robbed of faith in an everywhere-present God. Better to have clung to the Deity who could be pleased with the smell of incense and pacified with the burning fat of sheep and oxen, than to elect to live in a world from which the Adorable One has been banished altogether, or at any rate put so far away that the thought of reaching Him with our words is but a vain imagination. The truth is that modern discovery, instead of dulling our belief that prayer may find a hearing, ought singularly to warm and quicken it. Only consider the wonderful enlargement that has taken place of late in our notions of what is possible in the way of transmitting intelligence from one mind to another mind! It is within the memory of living men that instruments have been invented to do for speech what long ago the telescope and the microscope did for sight, namely, to extend its range. There is little reason to doubt that a time will come, and that before very long, when our present means of communicating sound—marvellous, nay, almost miraculous as they seem—will be superseded by adjustments and contrivances even

more wonderful in their effects. And shall we say of Him who has thus empowered us indefinitely to extend the reach of the faculty of hearing, supplementing his original gift of the sense itself with so generous an endowment, shall we say of Him that of necessity eternal deafness is his portion? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? The question was a cogent one on the day it was first asked, but surely never was it one half so faith-compelling as now. We may get closer to the truth even than this. Consider what speech is. A word is an embodied thought. When this word has been articulated and made audible, we call it spoken. So then speech is thought going forth upon its travels. But midway between the thought just born and the audible utterance of the lips, comes the as yet unspoken word. It has left the mind, we will suppose. It has not yet reached the lips. Now who can tell upon what other undulations besides those of the material atmosphere that thought just now clothed upon with a word may not be going forth? For man's benefit and that it may accomplish its earthly errand, it is committed to the waves of the air; but how know we that there is no more subtle medium still on which simultaneously it is borne to the auditorium of Almighty God? Human hearing is dependent, at least under the conditions of this life present is dependent; on the bodily organ of hearing,

the ear; but divine hearing may be just as real as ours without any such dependence. There is good and sober reason to believe that some of the brute creatures hear sounds that are wholly inaudible to us, the instrument of hearing having in their case been differently adjusted. But is there no intelligence, think you, anywhere in the universe to which all sound is audible? Do the sweet tones and pleasant harmonies of which Nature is so full have none to listen to them unless flesh and blood happen to be near at hand? Are the bird-notes in tropical forests, far away from any dwelling-place of man, audible only to the dragon-fly humming in the undergrowth, or the reptile on the river bank below? Have the falling avalanche and the swollen mountain-stream none to listen to their august music because winter has driven brutes to their caves and dens, and man to his fireside? I cannot easily believe it; but, were I forced to do so, I should still hold fast my faith that to the spoken word of man divine audience would be lent, and should still keep on praying my prayers to Him unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?

But supposing it conceded that God is able to listen to our prayers, can we think of Him as having also the ability to answer them?

As a matter of fact, we see and know that hundreds, thousands, millions of requests that are made to God by the children of men, and made fervently, go ungranted.

A mother prays, with all the earnestness of which a mother's heart is capable, for the recovery of a sick child,—the child dies. A father prays, with every fatherly instinct in him all aglow, that a careless son may be led away from temptation and delivered out of evil. The next mail brings the intelligence that while the prayer was fresh on the father's lips, the son was killed in a drunken brawl. Even while a whole congregation is praying "From lightning and tempest, good Lord deliver us," a thunderbolt falls out of the sky and shatters the cross upon the spire. People see these things, and they draw from them, or at least are strongly tempted to draw from them, the inference that prayer is idle, a waste of time and a waste of breath. We cannot wonder at it. But the pathetic thing, let me add, the convincing thing, is that in the face of it all, and in spite of it all, great numbers of men, and they by no means the least intelligent of their kind, keep on praying, keep on making known their requests unto God. What is it that inspires this unquenchable determination to continue hoping against hope, this dogged resolve to believe in God's ability not merely to hear, but also,

if He will, to accede to the petitions his children bring?

It is, I think, the conviction lying deep down in the mind, and fast rooted there, that God is a person, not a mere force, like magnetism or heat or attraction, but a being possessed of what we know among ourselves as reason, and will, and loving-kindness, One capable of forming a purpose and working out a plan.

Having in the mind this notion of what God is like, a thoughtful and considerate man finds himself reasoning thus:

It is evident that this King of all peoples and Father of the whole family has in his plan many features that baffle me altogether; the mystery of his ways I cannot understand; much which, as it looks to me, He ought to do He does not, and much of what I think He ought to leave undone, He does. But if, in order to find a way of escape from these mental perplexities of mind, I let myself declare of God that He does not do as I would have Him do because He cannot, why then I make Him not merely such a one as myself, but I allow Him an even less dignity than mine, for in my own small sphere I am conscious of a certain measure of freedom to do the thing I will, for the better or for the worse; whereas, if I deny to God the ability to grant me my request, I take away from

Him that very freedom which I account my own highest privilege as his child.

We are often told that it argues a downright puerility to suppose that God either can or will answer our requests, because Nature is clearly and beyond all question an intricately contrived machine, no more able to alter its motions and change its bearings in compliance with a spoken word of request, than a steam-engine or a clock or a loom. This would be an unanswerable argument in favor of fatalism, and against the potency of prayer, were Nature a machine of which we could see the whole, but it is not. There is a background of mystery, a region none of our senses can penetrate, and there, wholly out of sight, lie the beginnings of power. It may be that behind the veil which sunders the seen from the unseen, the hand which keeps the wheelwork all in motion, is turned this way rather than that, or that way rather than this, because two or three believing souls have agreed on earth touching some blessing they desire to have, some work they would see done. It may be so, may it not?

I have touched upon the reasons for believing that the Almighty is able to hear, and both able and willing to answer prayer. There remains the question, Ought He always and invariably to answer it, in the sense of never refusing to any

petitioner any earnest request? To this a sober-minded faith will assuredly answer, No. Fatherhood involves governance, and governance involves the exercise of judgment, discrimination. The life of a well-ordered family is full of what we may call earthly prayer. The children ask the parents questions of many sorts, and bring to them requests of widely variant character; is it any argument against the efficacy of this which I have called earthly prayer, that some of the questions go unanswered, and not a few of the requests ungranted? No, the father remembers what his responsibility with respect to the whole family is, and certain of the favors the children ask he grants not, because he ought not. And yet, who will deny that in the life of that household the right of petition is a real thing, or that the exercise of it produces real results? So with our Father in heaven and his family on earth. All of our prayers He hears, not one escapes Him. Our adoration He receives, our thanksgivings He graciously accepts, to our confessions He lends an ear of pity, and as for our requests, some He grants, and some He disallows. Is He the less our Father then for that? No, not the less, the more. Possibly in the clearer light of the heavenly life, should it be granted us to enter there, we shall find ourselves thanking Him with greater fervency for withholding our heart's desire,

than we could possibly have thanked Him for conceding it.

Moreover, God forbid that we should confine our definition of prayer to the men begging for favors. Prayer is more than petition, it is communion, intercourse, exchange of confidences.

It is written of Moses, the man of God, that the Lord spake unto him face to face, "as a man speaketh to his friend." What more beautiful picture of heaven brought down to earth, could be imagined? The confiding to God the whole story of our troubles, of our disappointments, of our failures, of our well-meant endeavors, and last, not least, of our sins,—is there nothing of value in all this that we should leave it wholly out of view in estimating the efficacy of prayer?

Or again, think of how much a grateful heart has to tell. Is it nothing that the soul should have the opportunity given her to pour out before her Maker a glad offering of thanks? Is it nothing that the joy which Nature, in her more genial moods, sometimes inspires in us should be able to find expression in acts of heartfelt adoration to Him whom even Nature herself blindly worships? Is it nothing that all the kindly affections and associations of our homes can be lifted up and carried on the lips of household prayer until they come into the presence of the Father of

all the families of the earth and taste the preciousness of his blessing?

Are all these phases of prayer, all these modes of speaking with God, to be carelessly set aside as of no particular value, while the whole question is made one of mendicancy, and we are asked to measure the advantages off according to the arithmetic by which a street beggar reckons up his gains at sunset.

Intercourse with a character richer and better than our own is commonly held to be a great privilege. We can all of us recall friends to whom we have, as we say, owed a great deal on the score of helpful influence. But is it supposable that God has permitted personal intercourse between man and man to be such a potent instrument in the building up of character, and yet has made all intercourse with Himself impossible? If the spirit of man can, through the power of influence and sympathy, bless and uplift the spirit of his fellow-man, much more, a thousand-fold more, shall God, who, be it remembered, is a Spirit also, aid by intercourse and influence the creature spirit whom He permits to call himself his child. Wherefore, my brethren, let us pray.

SERMON IX.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF CHRISTLIKENESS.

"*Now I, Paul, myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.*"—II Cor. x. 1.

St. Paul was naturally proud. A born reasoner, he felt within himself that sense of mental independence which intellectual gifts confer on their possessor. Pride has its spring and origin in the consciousness of not being beholden to others for help. The man is, or fancies himself to be, sufficient unto himself, and whether it be riches, or high birth, or charm of look, or grace of manner, or strength of mind, or wealth of utterance, or force of will,—whichever one of these it be that underlies this conviction of self-sufficiency, out of the conviction, as easily as the plant from the soil, springs pride. The man knows himself to be strong in one of the recognized forms of strength, and being strong, he is proud. I say this, because we cannot begin to appreciate the exquisite beauty of the text until this, or something like this, has been

said. In order to gauge rightly the full value of an utterance, it is often necessary to take into account what it cost the man to make it. A courageous speech from lips naturally timid has even more power in it than it could have had as spoken by one always a stranger to fear, and for the same reason the manifestation by a proud man of a humility, the genuineness of which we cannot question, moves us all the more because we remember that the man is proud. We appreciate the effort he makes. Do you fancy it cost that free-born citizen of Tarsus, proud alike with the Hebrew pride of spiritual superiority and with the Roman pride of civic enfranchisement, do you imagine, I say, that it cost him nothing to take upon his lips the words, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"?

He, himself, seems to have been moved to astonishment by finding that he could so speak. Notice the broken form of the sentence, the evident hesitation, as of a man who almost questions his own identity, so startled is he to find that it is possible for him to say what he is saying,—"Now I—Paul—myself—beseech you. Yes, I, myself; I, who never thought that to beseech anybody would ever be task of mine; I, who used once to count on compelling people to assent, too proud even to dream of ever asking them to do so; I, who believed with all my heart in force,

and made but slight account of gentleness; I, who scorned to be thought meek, and rejoiced greatly because I knew that I was thought haughty; I—Paul—myself—beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

What was the revolution that had passed upon Paul's nature, making it possible for him to beseech those of whom once he would have waited to be besought? It was the fruit of that opening of the inner eyesight which came to him by the touch of Jesus Christ. Blinded for the moment to all outward things, he had been given that glimpse of the heavenly vision which was to change, and change permanently, his whole outlook upon life, the world, things present, things to come. From that time forth he had not been ashamed to "persuade" men.

I do not mean to assert that St. Paul, when he had become a disciple of Jesus Christ, and because he had become such, thought it necessary to abandon the appeal to reason in his efforts to make other men religious.

Were I to venture so inaccurate a statement as that, his own writings, every page of them, would withstand me to the face. Born a reasoner, a reasoner he continued to the day of his death. Argument was joy to him, debate a very delight. But what he had learned and laid to heart was this, that

not alone by mental discipline, the careful schooling of the thinking faculty, is man brought back to God. He had learned that religion centres in the will, and he had discovered further that to influence and mould the will, he must bring into play other forces than those known as the purely intellectual ones. Apart from scenes of actual sorrow and anguish, there are few more pitiful spectacles than the sight of a man, or worse still, of a woman, trying to think out heart problems by brain power. There are certain great practical questions of life that have to be met and answered in the warm light of the affections, just as there are other some that ask to be dealt with in the dry light of the understanding. We cannot settle points of duty, adjust the relations of home intercourse, apportion worship, and measure the bounds of all righteousness, by the very same faculties we employ in reckoning accounts and surveying land. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and these things of which I have been speaking come under the head "spiritual." We are spirits, you and I, and the relations between us are spiritual relations. To say that we can reason about these relations in the same way in which we reason about the relations of number and quantity, is to confuse the two notions of invisibility and spirituality, which are ideas really as far apart as the poles. There are a great many

things invisible about which we can reason and argue with no help from the heart; time, space, number and the like; but it is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose that a subtle discernment in matters of this sort is spirituality, or that to be able to chatter fluently about the infinite God in connection with these abstractions is to be spiritually minded. No, spirituality is not to be separated from the will and the affections. The fruits of the Spirit are the only unmistakable evidence of spirituality and we know what they are, for the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These are the signs and tokens by which we tell which way the Spirit has passed, and, failing these, we must not allow anything that seeks to palm itself off in their stead under the name of religion, either in others or in ourselves, to deceive us. A religion that has not the power of grasp which can enable it to lay firm hold upon the conscience has little right to be called a religion. God is a person, a holy, heavenly Father, to whom we men owe duty, fealty, obedience. To busy ourselves with reasonings about his nature, arguing about what He can do or can not do, while all the time we are trampling upon his commands and setting at nought his counsels is merely to insult Him. To worship Him, to give Him thanks, to make confession to Him,

to ask his guidance and to put our trust in Him, this indeed is religious, but do not dignify with that sacred title the mere volubility that can spend a lifetime in discussing the reasons for and against believing in Him, and then leave the question as much an open one at the end as it was at the beginning,—eloquent over the infinities, but dumb to the infinite One Himself. It was Paul's coming to see religion in this light of a service, a life of loyal obedience rendered to a spiritual head, it was this that changed his whole manner of dealing with his fellow-creatures; it was this that transformed him from the persecutor into the man eager to win by persuasion those whom he no longer dreamed of turning by force. He has sunk the disputant in the evangelist, and although logic still has charms for him, he confesses that greater than logic is charity, more potent than argument the gentleness of Christ. The world is not waiting to be converted to the Christian religion by a new statement of the case. Doubtless for every generation, as it comes mentally of age, the case does have to be freshly stated, but it is not the doing this that saves religion. Religion is kept from taking wing and quitting this sold earth altogether by the witness borne to its truth and power by Christlike persons. There are those whom simply to have known and loved is to have had one's faith in God

and life eternal re-enforced, invigorated, saved. It is not the publications of the Christian Evidence Societies; it is not the endowed lectureships for the defence of the faith and the like; it is not these, valuable though these are, that really keep men from apostacy and despair; it is the living epistles, the men and women in whose hearts Christ has been formed, and out of whose eyes He looks; it is these that persuade us to hope on, to wait for the morning, to pray and not to faint. One warm-hearted, thoroughly devout, honestly sympathetic Christian woman has more power to bless the life of the community in which she dwells, by showing forth the meekness and the gentleness of Christ than twenty masters of all the arts or doctors of all the sciences.

And never was this more true than now, never was there a time when the world more sorely needed illustrations of what is Christlike, to save it from making shipwreck of what faith it has. The hard thing to believe in to-day is the love of God. Evidences of the power of the Almighty never were more overwhelming than at present, evidences of his tender mercy never more difficult to produce. We find it easy to cry with the Psalmist, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand," for we seem to hear the clatter of their wheels on every breeze of fresh discovery; but when it comes to adding, "even thousands of

angels," we falter; we are not so sure of that, we say, for with "angels" it is natural to associate thoughts of joy and peace, of loving ministries of mercy and messages of good. Somehow amid the din of the chariot wheels the voices of the angels seem to have been lost. The conception of God as the God of the thunderbolt has been so intensified, that the thought of Him as the God of the still small voice seems to be fading out. It may be that the sum total of misfortune and tragedy in the life lived upon the earth is no greater than it has always been,—indeed, there are strong reasons for believing that it may be much less, and that it is continually decreasing,—nevertheless, it cannot be denied that our acquaintance with the world's sorrows and troubles is much more full, much more intimate than ever it was before. The disasters of four continents are brought to our knowledge more quickly than in other days we should have received tidings from the next village. As a consequence, we are becoming more and more accustomed to picture to ourselves calamity as brooding cloudlike over mankind all the time, and instead of thinking of God's mercies as new every morning, we think of his terrors as being that which we may the more reasonably expect. Indeed, we begin to realize something of the fearfulness of that picture sketched for us in the Gospel of the terrors of the last time. For

nation does rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there are earthquakes in divers places, and there are famines and troubles, and of these things there is not one that fails to reach our ears; we hear and know of all of them, and if we have hearts in any degree sensitive to prevailing currents of feeling, if a sorrow that is abroad upon the air has any power to touch us personally, we cannot but confess the difficulty of maintaining upon any natural grounds a cheerful faith.

It is plain, to be sure, that in a large and general way man is the recipient of bounty, of blessing rather than of cursing. The Power above us gives us air to breathe, sunshine by which to see, and, for the most part, fruitful harvests; but this is the very point that distresses us, the fact that unless we do look at things in the largest possible way, we cannot see the goodness. Among ourselves only that affection is really prized which shows itself as a personal thing. We must be cared for one by one, not merely in the mass, if the caring is to mean much. And so the soul rebels when it is told to feel gratitude towards a God who loves the human race only in the sense in which some great administrator of a nation's temporal interests may be said to love the people for whose wants he provides and to whose aggregate well-being he ministers. Does He

love *me*? the soul cries out; am *I* anything to Him apart from the circumstance of my being a fractional portion of the millions upon millions that inhabit the globe? To these questions Nature is dumb; or, if she gives any answer, it would seem to be rather a discouraging than an encouraging one. Nor does there seem to be good ground for hoping that Nature will show herself any more communicative in the future than she has done in the past. We are growing more and more familiar with the tones of her voice, but we are no nearer to understanding her message than we were before; the tongue is as foreign as ever, even when closer approach to the person speaking it has made the articulation of the various syllables clearer to the ear than before. What is needed is the interpreter, and that, precisely that, is Jesus Christ, God's only Son, the Word eternal. He takes up this unintelligible speech of Nature, and He says to us, "Let not your heart be troubled. This is the native tongue of the bright land from which I came. To you it is a jargon, but to me it is all clear, and now what Nature is trying helplessly to say to you, let me, your brother in the flesh, declare, God is Love." Do you wonder now, dear friends, that the Church plants her dogma of the Incarnation deep down at the very base of the whole structure of the faith? Do you wonder that as the guarantee of the truthfulness

of so momentous a message as this, "God is love," she should account nothing less than divinity sufficient? No fellow-man could tell us this with emphasis persuasive enough to make us believe it. We should say, "He means well. Doubtless he thinks that what he says is true, but he is a groper, like the rest of us, a fellow-student grappling with the same problem we ourselves are busy upon, and with no better real reason for thinking that he has solved it than we have." That is what we should say to a brother mortal trying to convince us, at this late day of the world's history, that God is love.

But is that what we say to Jesus Christ? Not if we are wise; not if we have eyes to see the unspeakable advantage that would flow from taking Him at his word and believing that He did in very deed and truth come down from heaven to tell us things which, but for his coming, we never should have known.

Moreover, we are not to forget, nay, we are to be very careful to remember, how much weight is added to the testimony Christ bears to the goodness of God, by the fact of his having been the Man of Sorrows. It is easy for the light-hearted in the day of their joy to take cheerful views of life, and to explain away by make-shift arguments the sadnesses and troubles of which they know only by the hearing of the ear. While the young man is rejoicing in his youth, and

glorying in his strength, while he has yet the power to remove sorrow from his heart and to put away evil from his flesh, the construction of a gay and cheerful philosophy of life is no very difficult task. But from no such source as that comes the testimony of which I have been speaking. It is the typical Sufferer who is the witness; it is the thorn-crowned One; it is the Man who hath seen affliction by the rod of God's wrath, who hath trodden the winepress alone,—it is He who opens his lips and says to us those gracious words which persuade us to believe that the Father Himself loveth us, and that in spite of all that looks the other way, and seems to take the very heart out of us, we yet have a right to trust Him. Gethsemane was no flower-garden. In the deep shadow of its olive-trees the Saviour of men tasted a cup more bitter than ever was put to mortal lips, and therefore when from Him the witness comes, in all gentleness and meekness, that the divine pity is real and that God does care for us, it means something.

Do you complain that this is an old story? Do you charge it with being an obsolete method of meeting an age-long and insuperable difficulty? Think twice before you say that in earnest. Ponder well what it really means to accept the alternative of despair before you too hastily decide to reject the alternative of hope.

There is a voice that has come sounding down the line of many generations, and its cry is,—"I am the Resurrection and the Life." In that voice there is hope for man. Dear friends, I beseech you by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ, whose voice it is, give heed to it, and be not faithless but believing.

SERMON X.

THE MANY VOICES IN THE WORLD.

"*There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.*"—I COR. xiv. 10.

THE chapter in which these words occur is mainly taken up with a discussion of the comparative value of the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues. In the paragraphs that immediately precede the text, St. Paul has been arguing that sounds of all sorts, whether they be the utterance of human lips or of things without life, such as instruments of music, in order to be helpful, must be, first, in some sense intelligible. How, he asks, shall it be known what is piped or harped, unless there be some gradation of sound, some arrangement, some harmony of the notes? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak unto the air. He then adds the very striking and suggestive words of our text:—"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."

It is with this parenthetical remark, rather than with any general discussion of the nature of the spiritual gifts of the apostolic Church, that I wish to engage your attention this morning. I am the more in earnest to do this because there is a very easy perversion of St. Paul's meaning which makes him teach a doctrine which he of all men would most vehemently have abhorred. In order that we may the better understand both the false interpretation and the true, let us set ourselves first to inquiring what these "many voices" which are said to be in the world are.

A voice, in the simplest sense the word can bear, is the utterance of a sound. Thus we speak of the voice of the forest, the voice of running brooks, the voice of ocean, the voice of the thunder. These are all of them sounds that contribute to our education, our training as men. Of these voices of Nature, some terrify, some delight, some soothe us; and none of them is without signification. Again, many things which literally are voiceless, may yet be said to have voices because they suggest thought and feeling in such a vivid way that it seems as if they spoke to us. Thus in the Book of Genesis God is represented as saying to the murderer Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." In this sense, also, are there many voices in the world,

none of which is without signification. Thus we speak of the voice of art, the voice of poetry, the voice of public opinion, the voice of scholarship, the voice of criticism—meaning, of course, the appeals to our attention and interest, the bid for our allegiance or the demand upon our obedience which these various powers, in their various ways, and for their various purposes, put forth.

Now the false interpretation which I said it was possible to place upon the text is this, namely, that because the apostle says that no one of these countless voices in the world is meaningless, therefore, all of them are entitled to a hearing. St. Paul declares that the voices have all of them signification, but he does not say that all of them are significant of good. It may be that some of them are voices upon which we should do well to shut our ears. Because a voice has a meaning, it by no means follows that the meaning of it is a salutary one. The voice of a fog-bell on a reef is a voice not without signification, and what it signifies to the sailor is danger. He knows the moment he hears that voice that the sooner he can get beyond its range, the better for him and for his ship. I mark this distinction with the more emphasis for the reason that there is a certain way of looking at life and life's possibilities which is becoming very prevalent, but which is as dangerous as it is popular. I refer to the

notion that character is a thing for which a man is not personally responsible. Character, so this easy-going view of life would have us believe, is simply the result of the native instincts, desires, inclinations, habitudes which a man brings with him into the world, as these may happen to be modified by the circumstances of the individual's lot. According to men's inborn peculiarities of temper and disposition, so this dangerous reasoning tries to prove, will be their readiness to listen to one or another of the many voices of which the air is full, and they have as good a right to follow one as to follow another. For instance, if a man happen to have a heritage of strong animal instincts, if he have been born with a great deal of the brute in him, why then it is only what might be expected that he will listen to and obey those voices which allure him to sensuality and crime. On the other hand, if he be the inheritor of refined tastes, if he come of a race of artists or scholars, then it is equally fair to predict that he will in due time be brought under the influence of those clearer voices which address the intellect and the imagination. The great point, according to this view of human nature, is to find out one's bent, and then to follow it, fearless of consequences, whether it leads towards the upland or the slough.

It is not necessary to a successful uprooting of this

poisonous doctrine that we should deny the existence of hereditary traits, transmitted aptitudes and characteristics, for to do so would be to fly in the face of facts, and facts are sacred as well as stubborn. The Bible everywhere recognizes, indeed the Bible used, not long ago, to be much found fault with for recognizing, the very distinct relation of cause and effect that links the sins and virtues of the children to the sins and virtues of the fathers, even to the third and fourth generation.

Of late, the Bible has not been so much criticised upon this score, because, with the progress of research, the truth has been found to be, as in the long run it will always be found to be, on the Bible's side. The danger now is in the opposite direction. The present tendency of anti-Christian thought is towards the opinion that a man is what he is solely because of his surroundings. His line of action is the resultant of the forces brought to bear upon him from various points. In calculating his horoscope, the element of free-will must be set down as zero.

This is a very comforting doctrine to a man who is conscious that he has allowed himself to be the sport of every wind of influence breathed upon him from whatever point of the compass. When one has yielded without resistance to a thousand strong temptations simply because they were strong, the assur-

ance that there was no help for it, coming to him in the name of philosophy, or possibly of religion, is a very soothing message. It is an anodyne to the soul. It lulls to sleep, or at least hushes into silence, the murmurs of that troublesome companion, conscience. But to one whose eyes are open to the truth that the soul's perfection can be compassed only by her attainment of freedom, that a man is only then truly a man when, enabled by the Holy Spirit of God, he has risen above the level where he yields to temptation, as the dry stubble yields to flame under the stress of a resistless law—to one who plainly sees this, I say, the doctrine that a man is not to blame for following any voice that happens to attract him, seems and rightly seems, a doctrine of devils.

It has a plausible look upon the surface, this plea that, as there are many sorts of people in the world, so are there many kinds of voices, none of them without signification, but one of them significant to one man, another to another; the argument is a taking one, but it is one of those arguments that must be tried by its results. The result of it is that it lands men in a present hell, and this is the condemnation of the premises. Logicians have a definite name for that method of testing the validity of an argument. Our Lord calls it judging a tree by his fruits. This is easily understood.

For example, you may have heard the argument applied to music in some such way as this,—God is the author of harmony; He made the ear, with all its marvellous capabilities; He created the atmosphere, with its vibratory powers; He ordained the laws of sound; and He so correlated these three by mutual adaptations and adjustments that we have as a result that mysterious effect called music; we have the strange fact of a human soul swayed this way and that, elevated, subdued, fired, softened, exhilarated or made sad—all in obedience to a succession of air-waves, originated by a string, a wire, or a piece of wood. Well then, if this be so, if to the eye of the devout mind the finger of God is discernible at every step of the process, if He endowed the instrument of music with its powers, if He gave to the atmosphere its undulations, if He conferred upon the ear and brain of man their quick susceptibilities, what right has any body to say that any one kind of music is more "sacred" than another? Why is not the dance music at a revel as truly divine as the anthems of the cathedral service? God made both. All voices have their signification. Let the man who is of a religious turn of mind enjoy his psalm tunes; we who are of another way of thinking will have music of a different sort, we will have music that excites and stimulates. Who shall blame us? Did not God make the universe? And

are not the sounds we happen to prefer as much a part of the universe as the sounds you happen to prefer? A curse upon the narrowness and austerity that would shut us out of any possibilities of enjoyment.

It may be that some of us have heard arguments of this sort brought forward, have felt in our soul that they were dangerous and false, dangerous because false, and yet have not been able to command the right answer to them. One answer, and I hope it will appear to those of you who may have been perplexed by the false reasoning, a sound answer, is this: Music is but another form of language. In other words, it is an instrument for the conveyance of thought and feeling from one mind to another mind. The composer corresponds to the orator. He utters himself in notes, as the man of eloquence utters himself in words. The performer corresponds to the reader. He reproduces for the enjoyment of the listeners what another mind has originated. Now the moment we grasp this thought, that music is an instrument put into our hands for use, the absurdity of holding the Creator responsible for our bad uses of it becomes apparent. As well might we hold the maker of an edged tool responsible for murder, because, in a moment of frenzy, a workman has snatched it up and killed his companion with a blow. The tool was

made for beneficent purposes. The man who made it knew well enough that it could be turned into an instrument of violence. But when the violence is committed, no one dreams of blaming the tool-maker. Whatever can be said of music can be said of language. If all sorts of music are equally sacred, then are all sorts of language, all blasphemies, all impurities equally of God. The more you think upon this parallel, the more you will be convinced that it is a perfectly just one. God made music and God made language; and He gave man these precious gifts, saying to him, "Take them, and use them, only remember, that according to your use of them will you be judged. There are, indeed, many voices in the world, but take heed how ye hear."

I have brought forward this matter of music simply as one illustration of a general truth that might be variously illustrated, if there were time. The point I wish to enforce is this. Paths that look inviting are not for that reason safe. Fruits attractive to the eye prove sometimes bitter to the taste. All voices are not to be followed that happen to have something enticing in their melody. We must have a criterion, a test, a means of discriminating between the good voices and the bad. Where shall we find it? Dwellers in a very Babel of discordant voices, called now this way and now that,

bidden to-day to believe one thing, and to-morrow to believe its opposite, perplexed, harassed, dismayed, how are we to exercise aright the solemn responsibility of choice? Is there any one voice which more than any other one can command allegiance, and deserve it? Listen, "I am the Good Shepherd . . . my sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." Here is the object of our search; here is our criterion, our test; the voice of God speaking to us through the lips of Christ. Only insist that all voices making a claim on your obedience shall be in harmony with that leading voice, and you are safe. "Beloved," says St. John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This is but a paraphrase of our text. The spirits of St. John are the voices of St. Paul. None of them is without signification, but the question is, of what are they significant, of good or evil? We can afford to believe only such spirits and such voices as are in accord with the spirit and with the voice of the Most High.

Who are the called of God? Are they not they to whom this voice of God has come? Do not tell me that you have never heard the voice. It has been in the world from the beginning, and it is in the world to-day. In the opening chapters of the

Old Testament, and in the closing chapters of the New, we hear it. It is a voice of many tones, but of a quality that is always to be recognized. Other sounds have no power to extinguish it, even though it be low and they be loud. The man may hide himself from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden, frightened by the voice, but the voice finds him out. The song of birds can not drown, nor the thick wall of foliage deaden the penetrating words, Where art thou? On through the Bible, beginning with the Paradise of the past, and ending with the vision of the Paradise to come, we catch continually the echoes of that voice, now calling Abram from his country, his kindred, and his father's house; now bidding Moses forsake the treasures and honors of the Egyptian court; now reassuring in still, quiet tones the soul of the disconsolate Elijah; now uttering itself at the baptism of Christ; now bearing testimony on the Mount of Transfiguration; now filling with the sound, as of a mighty rushing wind, the house where the assembled church awaits the promised gift, and now saying to the Seer of the Apocalypse, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

Oh yes, you say, it is plain enough that God spoke to men in Bible times. It was easy in those old days

to hear his voice. But, somehow, now, either because He has ceased to speak, or because of those other voices of which the world is full, we moderns cannot hear Him. Do not believe it. My dear friends, God is just as much in the world to-day as He ever was. Nay, there is a sense in which He may be said to be more intimately present now than ever before. His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ has brought Him closer to the conscience and the heart of man than ever. God's spoken word never wrought those wonders upon earth that have been wrought by his Word made flesh. It is a delusion and a snare this notion that God has drawn Himself away from his creatures and left them to grope their perilous way alone. Just as really as He was walking in the Garden is He walking in our streets, entering at the doors of our houses, noting what we think, what we say, what we do. Are you still persuaded that you have never heard his voice? Think again. Have there been no times in your life when it has been made plain to you that to live for God is a nobler thing than to live for self! I do not ask whether the thought has ever staid by you for any length of time, but I ask, Has it never visited you even for an hour? I feel very confident that sometime and somewhere, every one here present who has passed the boundaries of childhood, has ex-

perienced the feeling of which I speak. Possibly it was at some moment of disappointment, when a cherished plan was broken up, a purpose long pursued brought suddenly to nought; perhaps it was in an hour of unaccustomed sorrow, when your eyes were opened for a little while to the shortness and uncertainty of human life; perhaps, though this is less likely, it was at a time of abounding joy, when your heart was so full of gladness, so running over with delight, that gratitude to the good Giver of it all seemed verily forced upon you; perhaps it was in the house of God, listening to his word, or witnessing the administration of his Sacraments; perhaps it was in the quiet companionship of some trusted friend, by some fireside or on some familiar walk;—I do not undertake to define the when and the where; I only repeat my conviction that there is not one of us to whom at least some whisperings of the voice of God have not come. Well then you know the quality of the voice. It is different from all others, is it not? You can, if you care to try, distinguish it among a thousand. I have only to add, Follow it. Obey it. Move away from those voices that are plainly out of harmony with it; move towards those voices that blend with it easily and make no discord. Out of the many kinds of voices that are in the world, choose

only those which are plainly significant of righteousness, and your reward shall be in this world great, but still greater when you come to where

"Beyond these voices there is peace."

SERMON XI.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

"*But one thing is needful.*"—St. Luke x. 42.

A brief statement this, but within its narrow compass is shut up the secret of the perfect life. In the face of the war of words continually waged over religion, the value of a single clear note of this sort is priceless. The sound of it brings us to our bearings; tells us where we stand. Wearied in the multitude of our counsels, we turn for relief to Him who is Counsellor by eminence, the Teacher of the teachers; perhaps He can simplify matters. We are not disappointed. To the infinite relief of our perplexity, this Christ stands forth and assures us that of the many things they are talking about, but one is needful. We thank Him for it. No doubt, if we will only listen, we shall hear Him also tell us what this "one thing" is.

But delaying our demand for this supreme answer a little while, let us weigh the statement as it stands.

Let us try to find out in what particular sense it is true, for evidently in all senses true it cannot be, that only one thing is needful.

A quibbler with words could easily tell us of a dozen ways in which the saying ought to be modified and qualified before we allowed ourselves to accept it in its length and breadth. But Christ was not a master who dealt in exceptions. It was not his habit to take the strength out of his utterances by appending to each of them a list of the cases to which it did not apply. He used for his building material large, lucid blocks of affirmation. He put things strongly; gave his laws in the large; dictated without parenthesis, or foot-note, or gloss; and left it to the sanctified common sense of his people to interpret the thing said with discretion. The point He seeks to make, for example, in this rebuke of Martha, if rebuke it must be called, is nothing else than this,—namely, the value in human life of the principle of proportion. Here are these two sisters, one of them very much taken up with household affairs, the other of them continually athirst for the living God. Christ does not mean to tell the housekeeper, Martha, that all her assiduous, painstaking attention to the domestic interests, all her careful provision for the comfort of others, are of no account; that her much serving is to her discredit, and that her efficiency is her shame. He

simply wishes to remind her that there is a faculty of the soul higher than the one which, just at this moment, she happens to have put into active use; and He cautions her against supposing that the playing well of this lower part, which belongs to time, can excuse her from attention to that better part, which eternally endures. "The one thing needful," He would have her know, is such a thing as shall show itself to be of value after all things else shall have passed away. Proportion your life with wisdom. To that which is essential, necessary, lasting, give the primacy. But one thing is needful. Enthrone it in your thoughts, and let the other things, the things not needful, group themselves about it as they will.

It is a pity that this important saying of our Lord's should have become so exclusively associated as it is with the household life of women. To tie words close up to the particular occasion that originally called them forth is sometimes to do a great injustice to whole classes of interests to which they really apply.

Forgetting then, for the moment, these women of Bethany, look and see how true it is that the failure to distinguish carefully between what is essential and what is non-essential, between the thing that must be and the thing that need not necessarily be, makes trouble wherever it occurs. It is the sin against

proportion, and, as such, it is in art, fatal to beauty; in science, fatal to progress; in theology, fatal to catholicity; and in the conduct of life, fatal to the soul's health.

In figure painting, for example, the essential thing is a correct anatomy. What is thoroughness of external finish, what is brilliancy of coloring, what is felicity of touch, ingenuity of treatment, if all the while the drawing be bad, if the eye see at a glance that underneath the flesh there are no bones, no definite skeleton to give contour, symmetry and vigor to the pictured form? The "one thing needful" is lacking, and consequently all the other merits of the picture, praiseworthy as they would be if associated with that, go for nothing. The artist pinned his hope of success to secondary excellencies, and their failure is his failure.

Science, again, like art, has its one thing needful, and in the case of science this one thing is insight. Discovery is but another name for the power of flying straight to the essential point, the heart of the matter. The eye of the second-rate observer wanders about here, there, and everywhere, successful in nothing but in mistaking cause for effect, symptom for disease, aberration for orbit. Meanwhile the quick insight of the master-mind has grasped the truth for which the other only groped, and with this one thing

needful for a key is opening at will all the closed doors of the problem.

In still another way, theology, through its history, enforces the same point. How often have the teachers of the Church, mistaking private opinion for the revealed truth of God, fallen into the very error against which our Lord gave warning at the outset, when He spoke of "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The essence of the gospel, so far as doctrine is concerned, the one thing needful for the survival of the Christian faith may be compressed into a few sentences. We have it in the simple Creed we say together when we worship, the common heritage of the whole Church. But curious, active minds, deeply interested in the questions of the soul, are seldom content to let the matter rest thus. They insist upon setting the powerful machinery of the intellect to work upon these simple sentences. There are inferences to be drawn; conclusion wrapped within conclusion, tempting on the thinker to closer and still closer analysis. All this is natural, very; praiseworthy, nay, inevitable. The mischief begins when the thinker has become so enamored of the product of his thinking that he mixes up his personal conclusions with the great verities of the faith itself, and tells men that unless they can believe his private inferences from the Creed, they are not believing the

Creed. Even supposing the inference to be a true one, it does not follow that the man who draws it has a right to exact assent to it from all men, for what he says, though true, may be far from having that character of essential truth which would justify the Church in making it part and parcel of the universal Creed. To break the unity of the body of Christ for the sake of enjoying a chance to emphasize an article of belief which the whole body never did accept and is never likely to accept, is to sin against the rights of all the people of God. And yet how common it is to hear opinions, which are nothing in the world but opinions, quoted, appealed to, depended upon, as if they were that very bread of life for lack of which the soul must starve to death. Opinions about the sacraments, the way in which they ought to be administered, the nature of the grace associated with them, the *modus operandi* of the conveyance of the blessing; opinions about the state of departed souls, the character and duration of punishment hereafter; opinions about the interpretation of prophecy and the precise time of the promised return of Christ to judge the earth; opinions even about such purely historical and antiquarian points as the identity of the lost tribes of Israel with the modern English race, or the original purpose of the builders of the great pyramid —we all know how hotly it is possible to contest them.

Some of them have been made the ground of organized separation from the historical Church, others of them only furnish material for dispute between parties within the Church. Of course I do not mean to put them all upon a footing, or to conceal the very marked importance of some of them as contrasted with the comparative triviality of others of them; I simply use them as illustrating the matter in hand, namely, the evil that comes of confusing the essential with the non-essential, the thing that must be with the thing that need not be. There are articles of belief to renounce which is equivalent to giving up, I do not say religion, but certainly the Christian religion. It is of the utmost importance that only so much as is believed by the whole Church should be exacted of any one member of it, and we ought to reckon it a grievous sin against catholicity whenever a mere opinion is declared, whether by Pope or sect, a necessary doctrine, and so put upon a level with the faith once delivered.

But enough of the general principle. Our rapid glance at one after another of the fields in which the human mind is active has brought out with sufficient clearness the value of proportion as a characteristic of good work. Whatever seeks the praise that comes to either beauty or utility must make sure beforehand of this quality. Without the "one thing need-

ful" to give it stiffening and backbone, your structure, be it this or be it that, is a failure. In art, in discovery, in theologizing, we have seen how this is true. And yet, so far, I seem to have been holding the subject off at a distance, looking at it through a glass darkly. Come with me and let us try to put ourselves face to face with the thought our Saviour had in mind when He said to that over-tasked and over-anxious friend of his, "But one thing is needful." If we can make the endeavor successful, our law of proportion, which up to this moment may have seemed to many of us a mere curiosity of thought, a pretty conceit of the mind, will straightway be seen to be the very most real thing in all the world.

I recall a striking expression of St. Paul's which may be of use to us, and the more so because any independent attempt to affirm with positiveness just what Jesus meant by the one thing needful might have a look of presumption. With an apostle for interpreter, we shall feel more safe. Let me remind you then of a sentence in which Paul expresses the wish that a certain something which he names may "rule" in the hearts of those to whom he writes. We speak familiarly of the ruling motive, the ruling desire, the ruling ambition, meaning always to designate by our phrase that one supreme principle which as a matter of fact does sway the whole being of the

man we happen to have in mind. Certainly, then, we can scarcely go astray if we identify that which the apostle hopes may "rule" in the hearts of his converts, with that which this apostle's Master had affirmed to be "the one thing needful." And what is it of which Paul so speaks? It is the peace of God. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." Jesus discerned, it is not for us to say how or by what process, in the still, patient woman, who, as He said, had chosen the better part, He discerned in her the presence of this peace. He saw how it lay at the very innermost core of her soul's life. He saw how all else in her character depended upon this central holdfast, finding, as the branch does in the trunk, both origin and support there; and it could not seem to Him otherwise than accurate and truthful to speak of a so evidently essential possession as "the one thing needful."

For only think how much is covered by and included in "the peace of God." We are not to suppose that because it is spoken of as the "one thing" there is about it any narrowness or littleness. Far from it. A very comprehensive unity indeed has this one thing. It is called the peace of God because it comes from Him; He is the source and fountain of it. By the "of" we are to understand origin; the peace belongs to Him and we have it as a gift,

have it for the asking. Were He not "the God of peace," there could be no "peace of God." And if, for you and me, the promise ever is fulfilled that our peace shall be as a river, our search for the head-waters of the stream must be in that far mountain-land where stands the throne.

Again, consider what it is opposed to, and what it differs from, this peace of God, which we are to let be the one ruling influence in our hearts. It is the opposite of restlessness and of that fretful, querulous discontent which spoils the melody of life. The soul that owns the peace of God is not greatly distressed by failure nor very greatly elated by success; certainly not so much distressed or so much elated as wholly to forget how these things are likely to look in the retrospect of the eternal years.

To say that the peace of God makes men wholly indifferent to what goes on around them, dead to emotion, unconcerned as to whether gladness or sorrow be in the air, would not be to commend it. But to have that in us which emotion cannot overmaster, and which all-prevailing change cannot undermine, is certainly a good thing, considering what the world is, and the surprises for the better or the worse to which we are so constantly liable. It was a great thing for David, for instance, to have ventured to say of any man, "he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart

is fixed." Probably his eye had fallen upon some Nathaniel or Mary of that earlier day plainly possessed of the one needful thing, and he had marvelled to see what the peace of God could do.

Perhaps it is a sign that we have something of the peace of God about us, at least it may be an encouragement to us to believe that we are seekers after it, if we are conscious of a genuine desire to know more than we do know about things divine, if we feel sure that we are not standing in antagonism to God, keeping thoughts of Him purposely and persistently out of our minds, but so far from being of this temper are really anxious to feel after Him and find Him, to know Him better and to love Him more. Perhaps the peace of God is a thing of degrees, and perhaps we ought not to be wholly discouraged and set back by finding that sometimes God seems nearer to us than He does at other times, and the better part which shall not be taken away a more real possession one day than another day. It cannot possibly be that an unbroken joyousness of spirit, a ceaseless gladness of heart is the one thing needful, for then would Jesus Himself seem to have lacked that which He enjoined on others. There were times when even his soul was exceeding sorrowful, times when He groaned in spirit and was troubled. And yet it was most frequently in close connection with just such hours as

these that the benediction of peace was wont to fall from his lips upon those who stood around. Under the very shadow of the cross we hear Him say to us, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

It is their loyal assent to words like these that prompts Christians to point those who are in search of the one thing needful to Him we call the Saviour. Christians do not go out of their way to quarrel with those who declare that they can find the peace of God elsewhere than in the near neighborhood of the cross. If any man affirms that without aid from written Scripture or sacramental Church, he can secure that needful thing which is to stand by him myriads of ages hence, when the world shall have burnt to coal, if he insist that he can do this as a Buddhist, or as a Confucian, or as a mere philosophical student and thinker, Christian believers need not think it incumbent on them to set the battle in array against him. Let him alone. For ourselves, we are convinced that we have in Him whose marred face looking out upon us from the Gospels chains our gaze, and whose gentle voice laden with pity goes straight to the heart; we are convinced that we have in Him the true and living way that leads to God, and if we can persuade others to be of the same mind, we are glad; but to condemn, to sentence, this is the

prerogative of the final Judge, not your duty nor mine. Indeed, there can be few better evidences that the peace of God does rule in our hearts than when we find ourselves perfectly ready to leave Him to settle, in his own way and time, controversies and strifes which it would be the delight of our self-will to dispose of arbitrarily, now, this moment, at a stroke. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me," saith the Eternal.

SERMON XII.

LATENT FAITH.

"*King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.*"—ACTS xxvi. 27.

THIS was a blunt way of dealing with the man, and yet a wise way, too. Many a criminal has been shamed into confession by having his guilt confidently charged upon him. And as with bad secrets, so with good ones, convince another that what he has been trying to hide is really known, and he gives up at once. The instincts of our nature of their own selves all incline to openness and acknowledgment; concealment is an acquired art.

Paul had reason to think that Agrippa, away down in his heart, in spite of an affectation of indifference, did believe in the God of the prophets, did tacitly accept the premises of his great argument, and so no sooner had he asked him whether he believed than he followed up his question with assertion and positive statement. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

Why did Paul speak in this way to Agrippa, who was merely present at the interview as a guest, and not take the same attitude towards Festus, the Roman governor before whom he was arraigned? A glance at the circumstances of the case will tell us why.

For more than two years, Paul had now been lying imprisoned at Cæsarea. Saved from the violence of a mob at Jerusalem by the intervention of the military officer in command there, he had been sent down for safe keeping to this city on the seacoast, then the headquarters of the Roman power in Palestine. At the time he was sent down, Felix was governor of the province, but shortly before this interview in which we are interested took place, Felix had been recalled, and Festus had come to succeed him. The political condition of the country just then was not unlike the present state of things in British India; that is to say, there were several nominal governments all existing at the same time, and yet all but one of them holding power merely by permission and on sufferance. The Herod family, of which this Agrippa was the last, and, in some respects, the least worthy representative, were really the vassals of Rome. Such power as they held, they held on condition, understood if not expressed, of fidelity to the Empire. Their thrones, like those of the mediatized princes of Germany at the present day, rested on a

larger and stronger throne, and underneath the robes of sovereignty they carried about with them the consciousness of servitude.

No sooner, therefore, was Festus fairly settled in his new office as Roman governor at Cæsarea, than we find Agrippa and his sister Bernice thinking it incumbent on them to go and pay him a visit of ceremony. In the dearth of amusements with which to occupy the time of his royal guest, Festus bethought himself of the prisoner Paul. He knew Agrippa to be well acquainted, as he himself was not, with the controversial questions which agitated the Jewish mind, and he probably thought the opportunity a good one for learning something about the prejudices and peculiarities of the turbulent people he had been sent to govern. Every line of the narrative in which the writer of the Acts describes the interview is full of interest and suggestion. What a touch of naturalness there is, for instance, in the statement that Agrippa and Bernice came into the audience-room with "great pomp." Power held by an insecure tenure always makes an affectation of display. And so here it is Agrippa, not Festus, who comes with great pomp, eager to bolster up his unreal royalty with the paraphernalia of power. But there was one point where Paul, always quick to discriminate, and equal to the emergency, saw his chance. Agrippa

was not a heathen. Worldly man that he was, selfish, luxurious, vain; still, at one point he was open to appeal—he had been brought up to pay an outward respect, at least, to the true religion. The Herods, although originally by race and descent Idumeans, children of Esau, had been, long before this time, brought over as a family to the Jewish faith. Bad men as they were, they were not spiritually on the same level with Felix and Festus, Gentiles. Like Paul himself, Agrippa had been taught in childhood to believe that the true God spoke through the Hebrew Scriptures.

Very likely Festus, Roman that he was, had never even so much as heard of Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Elijah before he came to live among the people in whose mouths these names were as household words. But with Agrippa it was otherwise. Utterly as he might have disregarded, all his life, the commandments of the two tables, completely as he might have set at naught the warnings of the prophets, still there was the persuasion printed on his conscience in childhood, and never totally effaced, that God had given his Law by Moses, had uttered his will through the goodly fellowship of the prophets. Hence the cogency of the appeal with which Paul closed his eloquent defence of himself: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that

thou believest." And hence also the restless, though probably scornful, character of the king's reply, which amounted to, "Presently, unless I am on my guard, you will make a Christian of me."

King Agrippa was a man about thirty-three years old when this memorable conversation was had between him and Paul. He was in the prime of life, his natural powers probably at their best, everything that was good, and praiseworthy, and high-minded possible for him, had he chosen to seek it. But he let his opportunity slip. God's messenger, so far as we know, never crossed his path again; and the smouldering faith, the dull embers of belief which Paul, by his quick question, had sought to kindle into flame, went out upon the hearth.

I hope better things of some to whom I speak today. We hear much in these days about latent skepticism, concealed unbelief, but, for my part, I am convinced that there is a vast deal of latent faith among us, an immense amount of unacknowledged belief. This is not a heathen community in which we are living, ours is not a pagan civilization. The laws, the usages, the traditions that moulded the thoughts of our childhood and youth, were laws, usages and traditions intimately allied to the Gospel of Christ. Faith in the religion of the Bible is in the blood of Americans, and if it is ever to be gotten

rid of, many generations will be needed for the process.

And yet, notwithstanding all this, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that many among us, at the present time, have assumed and maintain an attitude of indifference in the matter of personal religion. They do not see their way to an open confession of Christ crucified, to a frank avowal of discipleship. Why not? Well, they are not sure that they believe what members of the Christian Church are expected to believe, and so they think it better to remain in a non-committal attitude, unbiassed, unpledged. To such a man, superior to prejudice, proud of his fair, well-balanced mind, I address with confidence the words of Paul, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

Who are the prophets? They are the men who have truly spoken for God since life began upon the earth. God has never left Himself without witness. There have always been those who have honestly testified for Him in the face of idolatry and falsehood, cruelty and wrong; and these, whether they were many or few, were the prophets of their time, the messengers of the King, the spokesmen of the Most High.

There have been many prophets besides those whose names are known to us. The Scriptures refer

to them, but do not tell us who they were. Paul in what he said to Agrippa had reference to those prophets whose words the king had heard read out of the only Bible that existed then, the writings we now call the Old Testament. But when I ask you, this morning, whether you believe the prophets, I would have you take the question as covering a much wider sweep. This very Paul who appealed to the prophets has become, for us, and for our purposes, himself one of the prophets. His voice, that is to say, is one of those which, by the common consent of the best part of men, have been recognized as truly speaking for God. Take now the utterances of these prophets, by whom the Holy Ghost has been teaching men since the world began, and what is the substance of them? Foremost of all stands that primal and majestic article of faith,—GOD IS. That there exists a conscious One who is all-powerful, all-wise, and present everywhere, is a first point on which all the voices of all the prophets are agreed. All sorts of notions about the methods of creation have existed, do exist and will exist. Each generation unmakes and remakes its theories of genesis, its philosophy of beginnings. But that this universe, with its manifest order and method, ever came to be what it is by mere chance, ever grew into its present form without the action upon it and within it of a conscious, in-

telligent, purposeful Being, is a view of the matter so whimsical and forced that but few are found willing to avow it in plain terms under any circumstances. And yet men did not find out even this simplest and most primary of all the truths of religion unaided; they did not guess it by their own wit; God taught it them by the word of prophecy. He sent messengers to tell them that thus it was. Left to themselves, men imagined all sorts of gods,—gods for the rivers, gods for the mountains, gods for the forests, gods for war, for peace, for commerce, and for every imaginable interest. But Jehovah said to Abraham, I am the almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect. He said through Moses, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. He said by the lips of David, The Lord sitteth upon the water-flood, the Lord remaineth a king forever. He said by Paul, there is none other God but one. My unprejudiced, unbiassed, fair-minded, non-committal friend, believest thou these prophets? I know that thou believest.

Let us go forward. That this one God of whom the prophets have told men, is a God who discriminates between what is right and wrong, that He approves goodness and condemns badness,—in one word, that He is a God of judgment, condemning the wicked to bring his way upon his head, and justifying the righteous to give him according to his righteousness.

This is the second great article of religious faith. To become persuaded of this also the world required the voice of prophecy. The knowledge that God is a God of holiness does not come by nature. Man has to be taught it. We have all of us been told it from infancy, and so we take it as a matter of course that, if men are to believe in any God at all, it must of necessity be a righteous God in whom they will believe.

But this looking at it as a matter of course is a great mistake. The holiness of God is no more a self-evident truth which people cannot help seeing than is the unity of God. Both truths had to be taught to men, and have been taught by the prophets, and one chief evidence that they are truths and not falsehoods is just this, that after they have been once told with authority it becomes easy and natural to believe them.

Nothing is easier than to see the picture the moment the curtain that covered it has been drawn aside, but for the drawing aside of the curtain the intervention of a hand was needed. In revelation, as we call it, God is moving the hand that is unveiling the picture, and straightway we see. Now, how is it about this second article of the faith, God's righteousness? The prophets all agree that He is not only strong but holy, not only creator but discerner, not only king but judge. In this point they are absolutely

at one. There is no hint of discord or variance in all their teaching. Well then, answer me, Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Once more, the creed of Christendom declares that for us men and for our salvation this one holy God sent down from Heaven his only-begotten Son; that this only Son, who, on his own affirmation, had been in the bosom of the Father before the world was, took our nature upon Him that He might cleanse and bless and lift it up for ever; that He loved the race He came to save well enough to die for it; and that having died for it, He rose again triumphant over death, and ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. What is our authority for all this? Still I must reply, the prophets. "Apostles" they have been commonly called in history, and apostles undoubtedly they were in virtue of their having been sent forth; but prophets they were also in virtue of the blessed and joyful news they carried with them.

The essence of the prophetic office lies in the telling of the truth God is seeking to reveal to man. These twelve, John, Cephas, Andrew and Philip and the rest had seen a great light, none less than the glory of the risen Son of God. They went out north, south, east and west to shed abroad the light they had received; they bore on their tongues the gospel of the resurrection, the "glad tidings" that death is not

the end; the assurance, "Jesus lives." Other men believed them. They themselves had believed because of what they had seen with their own eyes, but others were found willing to believe because these apostle-prophets were so evidently sound in mind, and so terribly in earnest. And ever since that day multitudes have been found willing to believe, not on the score of having seen the Christ, but simply because they have been told what and who He was by those who in their turn received the story from the past.

Yes, they were words of power those prophets spoke. Only think how much they have survived! Kingdoms and empires have had time to be born, to live and to die since that first publishing of the gospel of forgiveness and eternal life, but it is a gospel as new as it is old; civilizations have come and gone, but this message of the Christian prophets is still here among us an active force to-day, the very languages themselves in which the tidings were first announced to the world have ceased to be spoken; they are "dead," as we say, but the word itself is not dead, it is a living word still, and a life-giving word. Among the influences that are swaying enlightened society to-day, point, if you can, to one more vigorous or efficient, more penetrating or subtle than that which we track up through the distance of

time until we are brought into the presence of those messengers of Jesus Christ who with the same eyes had seen Him hanging on the cross and radiant with resurrection light. The results that have ensued upon the world's believing those prophets' word are in themselves, perhaps, the best possible evidence that the word was true. No lie could have brought such wealth of blessing in its train. Man of the clear head, and steady judgment, believest thou these prophets? I know that thou believest.

Follow me yet once more. The apostles of Jesus Christ not only published a message; they also established a society. There is no escaping this fact. It stares us in the face from out the page of history. I said "established," but perhaps it would have been more accurate to say spread or extended. Christ Himself established the Church when He said, "Go teach and baptize," and all that the apostles did was to obey this initial command. They did go, teaching and baptizing, and the result was, that in due time, there rose up in the eyes of a wondering world that new and marvellous structure called the Holy Catholic Church. This house of God set up in the world, and still standing here, though new no longer, but weather-beaten and gray with age, this house of God has been the home and birth-place of prophecy ever since the days when it was first built. In-

deed, the Church is derelict to her duty if she fail to prophesy. She is planted here for the very purpose. Teaching is her first duty. Her mission and her office are to tell men the truth of God as it is revealed in Jesus Christ; and in so far as she does this her work is prophetic, since she speaks for the Most High. The Church says to a man,—You are oppressed with a feeling of guilt, weighed down with the burden of unforgiven sin, Come to Christ. He is the friend of sinners, and their Saviour; come, and coming, be at rest. The Church says to a man,—You are disappointed with your life. Time is slipping by; you are growing older every day, and yet how little has been accomplished. Come into my fellowship and learn the secret of real happiness by being useful to others, helpful, sympathetic, self-forgetting. This is the Christlike life. Let me aid you in finding this. The Church says to a man,—You are hungry and thirsty. Your heart is starved and your spirit parched and dry. Come and seek Him who is the Bread of Life. Come and drink at that spring whose waters fail not. Come and be Christ's man. He gives peace.

It is thus that the Church prophesies when she is faithful to her mission, and she holds forth her sacraments as the signs and pledges of the truth she teaches. She brings to her Baptism those who are

seeking forgiveness through the Christ; she brings to her Holy Communion those who are seeking fellowship and oneness with Him.

Yes, the Church's ministry is, and always has been, a prophetic one. She pleads for God. Her Scriptures, her pulpit, her sacraments, all bear witness to the Christ and tell of Him. Calm looker-on, unimpassioned critic, not easily nor soon to be persuaded to be a Christian, believest thou this prophet? I know that in thy heart thou dost. I know that thou believest.

Is all this presuming too much upon the existence and the prevalence of what I have called latent faith, unacknowledged belief? I cannot think that it is. But even if I have, by God's blessing, met the case of only one, that is enough. Few sermons accomplish more than that, perhaps few as much as that. But if there be one now present who feels that in his inmost heart there is far more faith in the truth of Christ's Gospel than from his outward walk and conversation anybody would suppose, let him ask himself whether this is as it should be. The outward and the inward in religion ought to correspond. The man who is outwardly religious while inwardly eaten up with selfishness or pride is in a bad way, but so, remember, is the man who having a conviction in his heart that Jesus is the Son of God, and his

Church the true home of souls, yet hesitates to avow the belief and lets himself be counted with those who disbelieve, so also is he in a bad way.

It is well to be afraid of religious hypocrisy, but there is such a thing as the hypocrisy of irreligion; shun that too.

How happy would it have been for King Agrippa could he have had the frankness and the courage to forestall Paul's assertion by promptly answering his question, "Yes, I do believe; and henceforth, God helping me, my life shall square with my belief."

SERMON XIII.

THE RELIGION OF THE PROMISE.

"*We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. . .*"—NUMBERS X 29.

THE words have about them a certain repose of spirit, a quiet confidence of tone, full of beauty. These men are on the march. The dust of pilgrimage is upon them. They know not, this morning, where they shall sleep to-night, and yet they are without anxiety. No nervous fears distress them. Faint they may be, but they are not disheartened: for they are journeying unto the place of which the Lord has said, "I will give it you." They know whither they are bound, and that is the secret of their peace. Hopeless wandering is, of all things we can imagine, the most dismal; but men in motion cease to be wanderers, when you credit them with a purpose. Give an aim to their movement, and you dignify it at once. They are travellers now; they are not wanderers any longer; they can answer those they meet; they own a destination.

It was this consciousness of an end in view that made Israel brave for the Exodus, and patient through the forty years that followed.

There is no need of my dwelling on the local incidents with which the words of the text stand connected, further than to remind you who the speaker was, and who the person addressed. The two were Moses and that kinsman of his by marriage, who lived in the near neighborhood of Mt. Sinai, and whose services as pioneer and guide the leader of the emigrant host was anxious to secure. And this is what Israelite says to Midianite by way of inducement to join fortunes: "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Obeying a true instinct, the Church of Christ has from the beginning understood the whole story of the transfer of the chosen people from the land of bondage to the land of promise as possessing, over and above its historical value, the preciousness of a divinely-planned allegory. Without casting any slur upon the narrative as a recital of accurate occurrences, the religious mind is rejoiced to read between the lines a parable of spiritual experience. In the light thrown back upon the Old Testament from the disclosures of the New, all the great events of that

earlier page in the history of God's Church become luminous with suggestion. Egypt, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea, Sinai, the wanderings, the fightings with Amalek, the Jordan, and at last the land of which the Lord had said, "I will give it you" —these, each and all, stand to the eye of faith as lucid images, way-marks for the soul, heaven-lent figures of the true.

Bunyan's famous allegory has, they tell us, a circulation among English-speaking peoples second only to that of the Bible. But Bunyan draws his inspiration from Moses. The true Pilgrim's Progress owns an earlier origin than the book which had its beginnings in Bedford jail. Indeed, we may, for that matter, go back far beyond Moses, and find the germ of the now familiar comparison of life to a journey in those touching words of the aged patriarch, Jacob, when he stood before the Egyptian king: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years." He too, it would seem, in that early morning of the life-time of our race, was thinking of the city that hath foundations, and "the land beyond the sea."

Of course, this principle of allegorical interpretation may easily be carried too far. Most of us can recall instances where this has been done to an unwise, sometimes even to a ludicrous extent. It is never

wise to lose entirely our hold upon the literal meaning of Holy Scripture; never wise to particularize too much in our renderings of the figurative sense; and, above all, never wise to insist that other people shall allegorize precisely as we do. But after due allowance has been made for all these liabilities to error, there still remain in our horizon certain great headlands and promontories which all, who are in the least measure interested to look, agree in seeing. It is upon one of these generally accepted, undisputed resemblances that I seek to concentrate your thought this morning.

"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." If we are honest and genuine in our Christian believing, these words are as true for you and me as they were for Moses and his Israelites. We, too, are on a journey. For us, to-day, just as really as for them in days of old, the stimulus continues to be simply this—a promise. Heaven cannot be demonstrated. We merely take God's word for it. Suppose we give ourselves up, a little while, to the undisturbed influence of so helpful a thought.

Not enough, in our times, is said—soberly and intelligently said, I mean—about heaven. Religion lacks the impulse which hope communicates. The pulpit is not as persuasive as it might be, if it preached

more believingly the promises of God. The tone of the common talk of Christian people is too perceptibly pessimistic, too deeply tinged with despondency. The quiet cheerfulness of temper which a settled faith in the truth of the heavenly promises would engender is rarer than it ought to be. Our motives and our aims grow to be of the earth, earthy, because our imagination is creeping, when it might be soaring. That strong metaphor of the Apostle, "tasting the powers of the world to come," takes no hold upon a generation whose sensitiveness to the very flavor of the supernatural has grown dull.

If asked to account for this slackened interest in heaven, some would be likely to give one answer and some another. Very many people have the feeling that the old-fashioned heaven of their childhood's thoughts and hopes has been explained away by the progress of discovery. It seems to them as if heaven were pushed further and further off, just in proportion as the telescope penetrates further and further into space. The gates of pearl recede with the enlargement of the object-glass, and the search for the Paradise of God, like that for the earthly Eden, seems to become more hopeless, the more accurate our knowledge of the map. The primitive Christians found it comparatively easy to think of heaven as a place just above the stars. To us, who have learned

to think of the sun itself as but a star seen near at hand, and of the stars as suns, such localization of the dwelling-place of the Most Highest is far from easy.

This, then, is a reason that many give for not letting thoughts about heaven have a very prominent place in their religion. The endeavor to imagine heaven baffles us, they would say; we cannot begin to picture it to ourselves in any intelligible shape; we can form no rational conception of what the life of heaven is like; and we see not how any good is to come from trying to think out the unthinkable.

Another, and a very different reason for keeping heaven, as it were, in the background, holding the mention of it in reserve, comes from those who believe that there is such a danger as that of cheapening and vulgarizing sacred things by too much fluency in talking about them. We do not like to hear the condemned criminal on the scaffold speak so confidently of going straight to heaven. It cannot be denied that there is a certain amount of reason for this fastidiousness, some strength in this protest. Doubtless there is such a thing as making heaven too easy of access by keeping wholly out of sight what Scripture says about certain things that shall by no means enter into it. An indulgent rhetoric may throw open the gates with a freedom so careless as to make us

wonder why there should be any gates at all; and lips to which the common prose speech of the real heaven would perhaps come hard, were they compelled to try it, can sing of "Jerusalem the Golden," and of the Paradise for which "'tis weary waiting here" with a glibness at which possibly the angels stand aghast. This is a second reason, a very different reason from the first, but still a reason, for observing reticence about heaven.

We should not, of course, look to see both reasons coming from one and the same class of minds. The one indicates a critical disposition that prefers silence to trying to talk about things of which no certain knowledge is possible; the other, a reverential spirit, that would have the pearls of divine truth kept shut close in the casket, where nobody can see them, rather than run any risk of letting them be trampled under foot of the swine.

And yet, in the face of both of these reasons, coming, as in many instances they do, from the lips of serious, sober-minded, discreet, well-informed thinkers about religion, I am disposed to cling to the ground first taken, namely, that it is a sad pity, our hearing so little as we do about the hope of heaven as a motive power in human life. For, after all that has been said, or can be said, these two facts remain indisputable; they stare us in the face: first that this life of

ours, however we may account for it, does bear a certain resemblance to a journey, in that the one is a movement through time, as the other is a movement through space; secondly, that any journey which lacks a destination is, and must of necessity be a dismal thing. Human nature being what it is, we need the attractive power of something to look forward to, as we say, to keep our strength and courage up to the living standard. When hope takes final leave of the soul, man is ready to lie down and die. We are encouraged to persevere by the light ahead, be it the merest glimmer.

Now the Christian religion is emphatically the religion of the promise. In heathen religion, the threat predominates over the promise; but in the glad faith that boasts the name of Gospel, the promise predominates over the threat. Christians are men with a hope, men who have been called to inherit a blessing.

Nor is the Old Testament lacking in this element of promise. It runs through the whole Bible. What book anywhere can you point to so forward-looking as that book? As we watch the worthies of many generations pass in long procession onwards, from the day when the promise was first given of the One who should come and bruise the serpent's head, down to the day when the aged Simeon in the Temple took the Child Jesus into his arms and blessed Him, we

seem to see upon every forehead a glow of light. These men, we say, front the sunrising. They have a hope. Purpose is in their eyes. They are looking for something, and they look as those look who expect in due time to find.

If this be true of the general tone of the Old Testament Scriptures, doubly, trebly is it true of the New Testament. The coming of Christ has only quickened and made more intense in us that instinct of hope which the old prophecies of his coming first inspired. For when He came, he brought in larger hopes, and opened to us far-reaching vistas of promise, such as had never been dreamed of before. Only think how full of eager, joyous anticipation the New Testament is from first to last! I do not mean to slur the tragic features of God's revelation of Himself and of his purposes. There is shadow, heavy shadow, in the picture. Certainly "gaiety" is not the word that truly expresses the temper of the book. But neither, on the other hand, is "sombre" an epithet we can justly apply to it. A solemn joy pervades the atmosphere in which Apostle and Evangelist move before our eyes. They are as men who, in the face of the wreck of earthly hopes, have yet no inclination to tears, because there has been opened to them a vision of things unseen, and granted to them a foretaste of the peace eternal. Yes, of Master and of

disciple alike is it written that this great power of hope was what sustained them. We almost wonder to find it said of Christ, but it is said. It was He who, for the "joy set before Him," endured the cross. And certainly there is no need of my quoting texts to show how largely those who took up the cross after Him drew on this same treasury of hope for their support. "The glory that shall be revealed;" "The things eye hath not seen," prepared for those who love God; "The house not made with hands," waiting for occupancy; "The crown of righteousness, laid up"—you remember how prominent a place these hold in the persuasive oratory of St. Paul. Quite as naturally from his lips, as from the lips of Moses, might have fallen the words: "We are journeying unto the land of which the Lord said, I will give it you."

The complaint that the progress of human knowledge has made it difficult to think and speak of heaven as believing men used to think and speak of it, is a complaint to which we ought to return for a few moments; for, from our leaving it as we did, the impression may have been conveyed to some minds that the difficulty is insuperable.

Let me observe, then, that while there is a certain grain of reasonableness in this argument for silence with respect to heaven and the things of heaven,

there is by no means so much weight to be attached to it as many people seem to suppose. For after all, when we come to think of it, this changed conception of what heaven may be like is not traceable so much to any marvellous revolution that has come over the whole character of human thought since you and I were children, as it is to the changes which have taken place in our own several minds, and which necessarily take place in every mind in its progress from infancy to maturity. What I mean is that no momentous discovery has been made in the last twenty, thirty or forty years, as the case may be, to render heaven any more unthinkable than it already was to educated minds at that earlier date. The really serious blow at old-time notions upon the subject was dealt long before any of us were born, when the truth was established beyond serious doubts that this planet is not the centre about which all else in the universe revolves. But the explanation of our personal sense of grievance at being robbed of the heaven we were used to believe in is to be sought in the familiar saying, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." We instinctively, and without knowing it, project this childish way of looking at things upon the whole thinking world that was contemporary with our childhood, and infer from the change that has come over

our own mind that a corresponding change has been going on in the mind of the world at large. We recall the thoughts we used to think about heaven in our childhood, and we say, naturally enough, "That is the way people used to think on that subject when I was a boy." This fallacy is the more easily fallen into, because it is a fact that, if we go back far enough in the history of thought, we do find even the mature minds seeing things much as we ourselves saw them in our early childhood.

But let me try to strike closer home and meet the difficulty in a more direct and helpful way. I do it by asking whether we ought not to feel ashamed of ourselves, thus to talk about having been robbed of the promise simply because the Father of heaven has been showing us, just as fast as our poor minds could bear the strain, to how inmeasurable an area the Fatherhood extends. The reality and trustworthiness of the promise are not one whit affected by this revelation of the vastness of the resources which lie at his command who makes the promise. Instead of repining because we cannot dwarf God's universe so as to make it fit perfectly the smallness of our notions, let us turn all our energies to seeking to enlarge the capacity of our faith so that it shall be able to hold more.

What all this means is, that we are to believe bet-

ter things of God, not worse things. It looks at first sight like an odd contradiction in terms, that saying of St. Paul's about the world by wisdom not knowing God. But how true we see it to be! Multitudes of minds to-day, the world over, are drawing from our enlarged acquaintance with the works of God the ungrateful—we can characterize it by no more appropriate word—the ungrateful inference that the works are everything and the Worker nothing. We rejoice to believe that it is not the best minds that reason thus. But we ourselves betray a tinge of the same way of thinking whenever we let ourselves be frightened out of the hope of heaven by confident assertions that the whole range of space has been thoroughly searched and that forsooth no heaven is anywhere to be found. It may turn out,—who can tell?—that heaven lies nearer to us than even in our childhood we ever ventured to suppose; that it is not only nearer than the sky, but nearer than the clouds. The reality of heaven, happily, is not dependent on the ability of our five senses to discover its whereabouts. Doubtless a sixth or seventh sense might speedily reveal much, very much of which the five we now have take no notice. Be this as it may, the reasonableness of our believing in Christ's promise, that in the world whither He went He would prepare a place for us, is in nowise impugned by any-

thing that the busy wit of man has yet found out, or is likely to find out. That belief rests on grounds of its own, and, far from forbidding, it encourages us to let our ideas of the fulness, the extent of the blessing promised, expand more and more. The Bible language about heaven was made symbolic, figurative, for the very purpose of allowing more and more meaning to be poured into it, as occasion should demand. A figurative saying differs from a hard, exact statement of literal fact in just this point, that it admits of expansion. The sign increases with the increase of our knowledge of the thing signified. And we need have no fear that, so long as we are in the flesh and on the earth, our acquaintance with the realities of heaven will ever outrun the capacity of the Bible language about heaven to express what we may have discovered. On the contary, let us make more and more of these great and precious promises of God. Let us resolve to think oftener of the place of which the Lord has said that He would give it us. There is no period of life from which we can afford to spare the presence of this heavenly hope. We need it in youth, to give point and purpose and direction to the newly launched life. It would be a strange answer to receive from a ship just out of the harbor's mouth, in reply to the question, "Whither bound?" —"Nowhere." My young friends, whose hearts

just now are bent on getting this and getting that, suffer me one word of counsel. With all your getting, get a purpose. Nothing on earth, believe me, will ever atone for the failure to get that.

But not in youth only is belief in this ancient promise of God a blessing to us. We need it in middle life. We need it to help us cover patiently that long stretch which parts youth from old age—the time of the fading out of illusions in the dry light of experience; the time when we discover the extent of our personal range, and the narrow limit of our possible achievement. We need it then, that we may be enabled to replace failing hopes with fresher ones, and neither falter nor sink under the burden and heat of the day.

Above all shall we find such a hope the staff of old age, should the pilgrimage last so long. But let us not imagine that we can postpone believing until then. Faith is a habit of the soul, and old men would be the first to warn us against the notion that it is a habit that may be acquired in a day. Those of us who are wise will take up the matter now, at whatever point of age the word may happen to have found us. What forbids our resolving now that from this time forth we will try to think more of heaven, more of the path that leads thither, and more of Him

whose heaven it is? For, after all, it is more important that we should learn to love and fear Him than that we should know precisely where in his universe He means to place us if we do: is it not?

SERMON XIV.

THE HEART'S IGNORANCE OF ITSELF.

"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—PSALM xix. 12.

NOT secret from others, but secret from himself, he means. The thought is one that continually recurs in the Bible, and more especially in the Book of Psalms. The frequent appeal for judgment on the part of these men of God, the earnest desire to have their innermost motives brought out into clear daylight that it may be seen of what sort they are, how striking it is! "Try me, O God," exclaims one of them, "and seek the ground of my heart." He is impatient at the thought of his own superficiality. The misgiving haunts him that the character with which he has been crediting himself is not his true character, after all; and so, with a praiseworthy restlessness of spirit, he longs to have whatever there may be that conceals and disguises his true self, at any cost of personal mortification, torn clean away. Let me see myself as I am, O my God; show me the

ground, the very soil itself out of which this tangled thicket of desires, ambitions, loves and hatreds, motives and feelings has its growth.

It is plain enough what our subject is to be,—the heart's ignorance of its own self, and the remedy.

Notice that the text is made up of a question and a prayer—the question, "Who can understand his errors?" the prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." We shall find it a help to observe this simple line of division in the ordering of our thoughts, and we will therefore, if you please, take the question first, and when we have determined whether it can be answered or not, we will go on to the prayer.

"Error" is one of the mildest and most indulgent of all the words we use to describe wrong-doing. Sin, guilt, wickedness, iniquity, seem to be the terms that carry the heavy weight of blame along with them; but when we say of a man merely that he is "in error," we consider that we are speaking leniently. And yet "error" really conveys, perhaps, a clearer idea of what sin in its essence is than any of the other words I just used. For what is error but the straying out of a path, the wandering from a way? There is no better definition of sin. "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep," the General Confession phrases it. The soul has a way, a path, designed for it, just as a planet

has an orbit. The difference between the star and the soul is that the one keeps to its appointed course while the other wanders, but when we ask for the reason why this is so, when we try to find out the cause of such unlikeness of behavior, it is then that we touch one of the deepest senses, perhaps the very deepest sense, in which it is possible to ask the question, Who can understand his errors?

For, when we think of it, who can understand any error? Who can understand error as such? Why should that be true of the human soul which is true of nothing else that is or lives, so far as we know, namely, that it is able to break the law? All things else keep within bounds, cling to the path; man alone is the transgressor; man—God's last work, and hence presumably his best—he only steps across the line.

An easy way of getting around the difficulty is to assume boldly that the exception is imaginary, and that there is really no such thing as sin. All we have to do is to persuade ourselves that animals are *automata*, mere machines of flesh and blood, and then to add to this the further belief that man is only a highly developed animal, the most perfect automaton of all, and the whole thing is done; the Psalmist's question is answered; and we understand our errors by understanding that error cannot be. Whatever is, is so because other than it is it could not be, and

hence it follows that whatever is, is right. We have been made of late sufficiently familiar with this line of reasoning. The answer to it, and the all-sufficient answer, is the voice of universal conscience crying in accents that cannot be mistaken, "I have sinned." Yes, in the face of all the subtle and persuasive argumentation by which ingenious minds seek to convince us that what we call transgression is itself only another manifestation of all-pervasive law, the heart stands up, and, "like a man in wrath," answers that it knows better. The Saviour the world craves is not a Saviour who shall explain away, but one who shall take away the sin of the world.

But waiving this general question, which is readily recognized as the ancient and impenetrable enigma of the origin of evil, let us look at some other ways in which we seek, and seek in vain, to understand our errors. Who can understand his errors, for instance, in the sense of understanding the way in which the principle of sin works in the heart, and manifests itself in the life? Sin has so many surprises for us, catches us so often at a disadvantage, lies in wait for us so ingeniously, that to be always on our guard and always safe seems impossible. Moreover, the will-power, by means of which temptation is resisted, is, or seems to be, so variable. We sometimes speak of the will as if it were a force constant and steady in

its operation, but this is far from being the case. The will is exceedingly uncertain; if it seem strong to-day, it may be feeble to-morrow. The fluctuations of the atmosphere are trifling, as compared with the variations of pressure which the human will betrays.

How often men, in the bitterness of their souls, cry, What can have possessed me that I should have said or done thus or so? They cannot imagine their true selves having said or done the thing, and so they fall back upon the fancy that some other being came in and took unrightful possession of the conscience, usurped it, thus making possible that which would have been impossible had the lawful sovereign continued on the throne. But this only shows how little we know ourselves, how hard it is for us to understand our errors.

Then, again, when we take into account hereditary tendencies and dispositions, when we consider, for instance, how much easier it is for one person to resist the temptation to intemperance, or violence of speech, than for another, the problem becomes still more complicated. It is possible, of course, to push our reasoning from these transmitted qualities to a false extreme, it is possible so far to exaggerate this feature of the soul's constitution as practically to nullify all moral responsibility; to make it out, that is to say, that a man is not to be blamed for the wrong

he has done, because if his parents had been better than they were, or his grand-parents better than they were, he himself would not be to-day the bad man he is. I say it is a mistake to press considerations of this sort too far, but then, on the other hand, it is also a mistake not to take any account of them at all. They have their weight, whether it be possible precisely, and with entire accuracy, to estimate that weight or not. It is not only that lookers-on observe hereditary traits coming out and hereditary faults betraying themselves, but people are often conscious, in their own experience, of moods and states of feeling, in which they seem to reproduce in the present that which had an earlier existence in some parent life. It is all very strange, darkly mysterious, and it only adds to the difficulty of the question which so perplexed our Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors?"

Again, letting go the past altogether, when we try to distinguish between the various sources from which, and channels through which our temptations approach us, how embarrassed we find ourselves. It is usual to classify the ways by which we are led into wrong-doing under three heads. We note this feature of triplicity in the story of the fall, with which the Bible account of man begins. The tree was (1) good for food, (2) pleasant to the eyes, and (3) to be

desired as giving wisdom. When we come to the scene in the wilderness, the temptation of the second Adam, there is a similar threeness, (1) the solicitation of the senses through hunger, (2) the moving of the lust of possession by the spectacle seen from the exceeding high mountain, and, (3), the appeal to spiritual pride on the pinnacle of the temple, "Cast thyself down." More briefly, the same distribution of the sources of temptation is put before us in the familiar formula, "the world, the flesh, and the devil." Now it is not difficult to discern the general accuracy of this threefold classification. We are conscious that some of our temptations come directly through the channels of sense; we see that others, such as the allurements of ambition and the attractions of praise, touch us from the side of "the world," so-called, or society; while of still others we can only say that they either originate in our own spirits or else are communicated by contact with other spirits, of whose nearness at this time or that we are ignorant.

And yet, when we have conceded the justice of this analysis, and have agreed to the triple scheme of assortment, it remains exceedingly difficult to decide, in any given instance, from which one of the three possible sources the temptation which happens for the moment to be pressing us with its vehe-

ment appeals has come. It is a point in favor of a beleaguered army, if the general in command only knows on which side to anticipate the next attack, but where there is uncertainty about this, or, what is worse, where there is the fear that the assault may come from all quarters at once, there must be corresponding loss of heart. So then, whether we consider sin in its essential character as sin, whether we track it through the blood of successive generations, thus seeking to follow it to its historical beginnings, or whether we undertake to analyze and sort out the various approaches through which temptation makes its way to the soul, in any case we find ourselves repeating somewhat despairfully the question of the text, "Who can understand his errors?" We are bound to acknowledge that, so far, we have found no answer.

Suppose now we pass from the enquiry to the request, from the problem to the prayer. Possibly light may dawn on us as we cross the line that parts the two. Though the mind has found no relief in saying over the words of the question, the heart, it may be, shall discover comfort in what follows,—"Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Some may wish to be certified how there can be any such thing as secret faults, seeing that one's unconsciousness of any bad intention is so often

pleaded as a bar to censure. When an insane man commits an act which if done by a sane man would be accounted a crime, we do not blame, we only pity him. We say he is irresponsible, not accountable. We may imprison him, as a guarantee for the safety of society, or as a means of ensuring his own safety, but we may not imprison him for guilt, since guilty it is not possible for him to be. Now, why does not this apply by way of rebuke to the Psalmist? What right has he to add to the burden of our known sins this unknown quantity which he labels "secret faults," faults hidden from our own selves? If they be so hidden, are they faults at all? and can anybody be in any sense to blame for possessing them?

But have you never heard it said of a man much addicted to profane swearing, that he "means nothing" by his blasphemous talk? that he is unconscious of using it? It is the commonest thing in the world. Hundreds and thousands of the people who sprinkle their conversation with oaths, do so without for a moment considering that with every sentence they are committing a sin against Him who gave them the gift of speech. And do we hold them blameless on this account? Their habit has indeed become a second nature, but for the formation of the habit are they not responsible? Whatever doubt may hang over our responsibility for what comes to us by the way of the first

nature, it would seem to be clear enough that we make this second nature, as we call it, for ourselves, and that if we are responsible for anything whatsoever, we are responsible for it. To say otherwise is practically to affirm, that if one wishes to be rid of the guilt attaching to any particular form of sin, all he has to do is to commit the sin with frequency enough to make his conscience callous, and the thing is done; he has absolved himself. No, we must not give in for a moment to this notion that the contriving to get our sin put out of sight is the same thing as the being rid of our sin. Besides, it often happens that the very faults which we have most effectually succeeded in hiding from our own eyes are the ones most obvious to those who are looking on and judging us from without. This makes the burden of more than one proverb and is a favorite theme with satirists, and justly so, for certainly nothing is more open to bitter comment than the sight we so often see of men blaming in others the very same things which meanwhile others are blaming in them.

A true picture of the heart as it really is would probably startle a man in much the same way that the reflection of his own face startles him when he happens to come upon it unexpectedly at some sudden turn. How strangely like it is, he says to himself, and yet how strangely unlike something I have seen before!

Undoubtedly one reason why so many of our faults are secret to us is because we are so easily content to live upon the surface of our own natures. We are not willing to take the pains to dig down and find out what there really is in the soil of the heart. It may be doubted whether there is very much in our day of what used to be called probing the conscience. Self-examination is in rather ill-repute. Religious people may not have been any more numerous in old times than they are now, but it does seem (at least if we may judge from their books) as if when they undertook to be religious they were more thorough-going in their religiousness than we are wont to be. Perhaps it was because they had more hours for purposes of devotion at their disposal. In these days of hurry and drive, religion is expected to minimize her claims upon people's time, just as other interests are obliged to do. The fact that religion is supposed to be the supreme interest makes apparently no difference. There is no leisure for so tedious and time-consuming a task as the deliberate and careful inspection of conscience. Thus it comes about that those of our sins which are least habitual to us most easily attract our notice, whilst those which are most truly characteristic of us retire, so far as we ourselves are concerned, into a dim obscurity, becoming (while they glare in the eyes of other people), "secret" faults to us.

But there is another class of secret faults besides these which, through our own carelessness have become too common to be noticed by us. I refer to what may be called the weak points in a man's spiritual constitution. Why should not each living soul have its distinctive constitution just as each living body has? It is a very hard word to define, and yet it stands for a thing which we all recognize as truly existent. The physicians say of a constitution that it is strong in this direction, or weak in that. They say of it, perhaps, that it has the seeds of disease planted in it which in due time will ripen. It is very possibly so with your spiritual constitution and mine. Each has its own flaws, its own weak points, its own liabilities and perils, and it is very hard indeed—yes, impossible—for the man himself to find out all about the matter unaided. Some better judge must be called in; these secret faults are beyond our reach; they do not, like the others of which I was speaking a few moments ago, escape our observation because we do not attentively look for them; but they baffle the eyesight notwithstanding, and in spite of all our looking. They are secret faults because recondite, deep, constitutional.

What now, in view of all that has been said, is our refuge? The case, as thus far stated, would seem to be a gloomy one, unless some remedy can be pro-

posed. Is there such a remedy? Has any one ever found out what to do about this malady of the soul? Yes, there is a remedy. And the praying portion of our text points us to a source of relief about which the questioning clause was wholly silent. "Who can understand his errors?" No one, so far as we have been able to see. But what follows? Then follows this—"Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Here is the help, just here. Invite the Saviour of the soul to enter in through the gateway of the soul, and to take up his dwelling there. There is no one who comprehends a piece of mechanism so well as the inventor and the maker of it. You may call this a rough figure of speech, and yet, up to a certain point, it is a just one. The soul is, indeed, something much better than a watch; but still the watch and the soul have this much at least in common; each has had a maker, and it is only reasonable to say that no one can possibly understand the thing made so thoroughly as the one who made it. But note carefully the precise point where the soul has the advantage of the watch. It is here; the watch-maker touches the wheels and springs from without. He handles them with most marvellous dexterity, to be sure, but still, after all, it is only handling. The Maker of the soul can do more than handle his workmanship. He has the added power of entering in and dwelling within

it, yes, actually within it, as intimately as the life power dwells within the very juices of the plant, making it lily or carnation, anemone or violet, each after its kind. The trouble is we shut the Life-giver out, and then we wonder that the living goes all wrong. All wrong the living will continue to go until we learn to welcome God, to be glad at his approach, to desire most of all his continual presence. It is well to say, "Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof," for this betokens a right humility, but it is still better to let faith and love outstrip humility, and to venture upon the prayer, "Abide with us."

Do not take all this, my friends, as figurative language. I speak, or desire to speak, of a severely practical truth, a truth which nobody who is listening, man, woman or child, can afford to disregard. It is possible (one might well hesitate to speak the words but for the warrant of Scripture behind him), it is possible to be "without God in the world," or, which is the same thing, to be in the world, and yet, all the time we are in it, to be separated from God. Again, it is possible to be with God in the world, and with Him in so intimate a sense, that He is actually a tenant of the soul. Now if we would be really rid of secret faults, we have something more to do than rely on our own strength

of will (for the will is, as we have seen, blind in this direction), we must call in the presence and the power of God. Confessedly unable to help ourselves, because of ignorance, we must avail ourselves of his aid who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things. He can understand our errors, and He is the only one who can. Those cures are the most effectual that heal the man from within. Surface remedies are proverbially disappointing. Defects of constitution, deeply concealed flaws of nature, yield only to healing forces that, like an atmosphere breathed in, penetrate to the very inmost sources of life. It is so with the secret faults, the hidden flecks, the unnoticed weaknesses which mar the wholeness and sap the strength of the spiritual man. We need to breathe in more of God if we would breathe out more of goodness. We need to have within our veins and bounding in our pulses more of the blood of Christ, if we would have the blood of Christ save us indeed, for it is not by an outward washing that God is making ready a people for Himself, but by that inward cleansing which begins at the heart.

And now, I trust, we can all see a little further than we did at first into the reason why David followed up his question so closely with his prayer. It was an honest turning to God that saved him.

Though the mind confessed itself baffled, the spirit that was in him saw daylight. He could pray even when he could not prove, and for the errors he was unable to understand, he sought an absolution sure to be complete.

SERMON XV.

HEROD'S BLUNDER.

"*They are dead which sought the young child's life.*"—ST. MATTHEW ii. 20.

THIS is a text full of encouragement for religious beginnings of every sort. It is the message that came to Joseph while he was acting the part of protector to the mother and the holy child in the strange land of Egypt. The three had gone thither in obedience to a warning. Herod, the message had run, will seek the young child to destroy Him. Flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word. But now that Herod is dead, and the whole sky changed, God's message is of another sort, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead which sought the young child's life."

It strikes us, at first sight, as a very strange thing that God should permit the infancy of man to be the defenceless thing it is. No other creature comes into the world so ill-equipped for conflict with the natural

forces that make war against our life as does the child. There is none so utterly destitute of what we call "self-help" as he, none so dependent on the protecting care of others, none so easily destructible. The slightest gust suffices to blow out that little flame of life, unless some hand or hands serve as temporary shield against the wind. Yet, here is man well-established on the planet, notwithstanding, and, so far as the competition of the other tenants is concerned, the master of it. The beasts of the field seem to make a better start in life; but man has the upper hand of them, and they know it. There was a time when they contested the supremacy on something like equal terms. It looked as if they might make an end of us altogether. But where are dragon and leviathan to-day? "They are dead which sought the young child's life." Man, the mature possessor of the earth, no longer dreads his rivals. The brutish claimant of the throne, "red in tooth and claw with ravine," has been set aside; the true king reigns. The primal edict spoken of man, "They shall have dominion," is fulfilled. We have dominion.

It ought not to surprise us to find something that answers to all this in the experience of the Christ. If He be what we believe Him to be, the Son of Man, it is not strange that his few years in the flesh should be found a sort of reprint, in

miniature, if I may so say, of whole chapters in the biography of the race. As it is with man, so is it with "the Man," "the Son of Man." This genus to which you and I belong is born into the world, has its narrow escape, survives, toils, knows scarcely where to lay its head, suffers and dies. Shall not the Christ, shall not that strong One who has come to carry us one step further on the upward incline, shall not He, before his rising from the dead, also be born in weakness, struggle up through peril; labor, suffer, die? For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels but that He might become the first-born into life eternal, He humbled Himself to be even as we are in this world.

I chose the text, my friends, that it might serve as a message of reassurance and encouragement: and this both as respects the life of the great world at large and our own little individual lives, your life and mine. There are vast numbers of people, perhaps more in our day than for many generations past, who suffer from a perpetual apprehension that the enemies of the faith will presently prevail and make an end of religion on the earth. The blast of the trumpets of the besiegers of the city of God frightens them. The confident cry of the assailants, as they come hurrying on with ladder and torch, takes their breath away. "Surely the end is near," they say to themselves.

"It will be impossible to hold out much longer, the enemy cometh on so fast." To people in this mood, scared half to death by threats they know not how to meet, and arguments they have no means of answering, it ought to be very comforting to look back over the history of the past. It is easier to believe in God's ability to save us in the years to come, when we recall and force ourselves to dwell upon the great things He has done for us in the years that are gone. Faith's guarantee is found in old promises fulfilled quite as much as in new ones made. Those who accustom themselves to think of God as having been our dwelling-place in all generations, are not likely to be disturbed by present-day misgivings that in this generation the foundations of that ancient abode may collapse and its roof tumble in. So, then, it is both instructive and reassuring to look back, from time to time, on critical periods in the past history of the true religion, and to observe the outcome of them. It is characteristic of the kingdom of Christ, or what in a less satisfactory way we call Christianity, that it is for ever susceptible of new birth. Of course it had its beginning, in a unique sense, at Bethlehem. I do not mean that any subsequent nativity is to be confounded in our thoughts with that one. Christ has never since been born into the world as He was born on Christmas-day. And yet it is true, as I just now

said, that history abounds in new births of Christianity. For the very reason that it is a living, and not a dead, religion, it is continually susceptible of renascence.

It is with religion as with languages. No new classics are ever written in a dead language; but every now and then in the history of a living language there comes along some great master of speech, and his use of the language marks a new era. How many new births of English there have been since English as a tongue began to be. But were English to become, what Latin is, dead, the great masters of style would labor at it in vain. They might easily succeed in reproducing old effects, they could not produce new ones. But what I was about to say was this, and it is worth thinking of, that at every such new birth of the true religion, while still the child is weak and comparatively helpless, a vigorous attempt is made to put it to the sword. The world-power loves not the Christ. Thrones based on selfishness cannot brook the thought of a rival throne built upon unselfishness. Courtly Jerusalem is troubled when it learns of what is going on in little Bethlehem.

Where is He that is born king? asks significantly he who was not born king, but has usurped the throne. And so the edict goes forth that all the chil-

dren in and about Bethlehem shall be killed, and there is much weeping and moaning, and many mothers suffer what only mothers can in the hopelessness of a bereavement not to be understood, and yet the one child against whom all this storm of wrath is directed escapes. Doubtless Herod himself fancies that a clean sweep has been made, feels well assured, in fact, that his policy of "Thorough" has effected the end desired; but no, he is mistaken; his infant rival is living, and not dead; in spite of all, the Christ survives. Egypt, the land of the overshadowing wings, is to protect Him for a little while, but only for a little while; only until the tidings shall have come that those are dead which sought the young child's life.

We have not the leisure to work out this thought as I should like to see it worked out. We can only, instead, glance at two or three instances illustrative of what I have been saying.

Look, for example, at the tremendous effort pagan Rome, the Rome of the Empire, put forth to kill the faith while it was still, as we may say, a little child, an infant. Herod's attempt was nothing to it. Rome by a true instinct scented in the Gospel a rival aspirant to the throne of the whole world. She was contented to allow Jesus a niche in her Pantheon; his statue, so far as she cared, might have its place

alongside of the idols of all nations; but it was evident that no such compromise as this would satisfy the boundless ambition of the people called Christians. It was too painfully evident that they regarded their faith not as a religion, but as the religion; not as one domesticated among the many, but as one destined to expel the many from the house. Hence the persecutions, as we name them. They were bitter, persistent, relentless; but it was his Church that won; it was the Empire that succumbed. At last, to souls weary of the Egypt of their banishment, there came the news, "They are dead which sought the young child's life."

Again, at the subversion of the partially christianized Empire; when the barbarian tribes came pouring down from the north to divide the spoil, how dark the outlook must have seemed to those who had the progress of God's kingdom close at heart!

How like a cruel reversal and ruin of the results of centuries of patient toil it looked! Here was the Empire at last sufficiently won over to be reckoned as nominally on God's side in the world, and now the whole fair fabric was to be pulled down and trampled upon. And yet all the while, through this very process, God was ushering in a larger and better conception of what his kingdom really is.

The bringing of northern Europe within the limits

of Christendom was a process full of peril; but it turned out in the end to have been a new birth for the Church. It was another narrow escape for the young child. The pounding blows of mace and battle-axe in that rough middle age crushed everything they fell upon. But somehow the Christ survived. Him they could not kill. God hid Him from their violence behind cloister walls, until again there came the message, "They are dead which sought the young child's life."

Even so, dear friends, is it sure to fare in the conflict that is going on before our eyes to-day. Even now a new birth is at hand for the Christian faith. Larger horizons than were ever dreamed of in old times are opening before our eyes. Meanings deeper and richer than were ever guessed begin to unfold themselves in the word of God. The sentences of the Creed, read in the light of recent discovery, instead of losing value, gain it wonderfully. We discern, as never before, the grandeur of God's plan, the splendid sweep of his design. We see how much larger the truth is than we had taken it to be. The conquest of the world, the unifying of the human race, the achievement of real catholicity for man is losing its old aspect of impossibility and is coming to be seen in its new aspect of probability. The outlook for missionary work never was so bright as now.

But in the face of all this, nay let us rather say, just because of all this, the world-power thinks the opportunity a good one for slaying the child-Christ in his cradle. "We are tired of religion," they say. "It is not equal to the demands of modern man. We repudiate its claim to be a message from heaven. Let us have done with leading-strings. The race is old enough to walk alone. Talk to us no longer about God, and the soul, and immortality. Man is here to be made comfortable. Talk to us about the world and how it may be improved, about science and what it has achieved, about progress and what we are to expect of it; but do not harp upon such worn-out themes as sin and holiness, repentance and forgiveness; of these we have heard more than enough."

And so the decree has gone forth that all the progeny of faith shall be slain, in the hope that along with the other innocents Christ may perish, too. But it cannot be, because God will not let it be. Believers of a hundred years hence will look back and wonder that we of these times allowed ourselves to be alarmed for the result. The Herod of that day may appear formidable to his contemporaries, but he will be a different Herod from the Herod of our time. No dead things look one-half so dead as the dead infidelities of the past; and in that day,

depend upon it, there will be none so poor as to do our Herod honor. "He made a mistake," they will say. "How foolish of him to suppose that he could kill the Christ!"

There is but one other application of the teaching of the text upon which we have any need to dwell, but that is one which we ought by no means to overlook. I have been speaking all along of the great world without us, and of the age-long drama of which it furnishes the stage. But let us look inward now, for a moment or two, and survey the lesser world of each one's own separate and personal life. Here also there is room for Herod and his wicked enterprise.

It may be that in this congregation there is here and there a soul conscious of having within it the beginnings of a new life. Aspirations never entertained until recently, purposes for good formed only of late, are making such a heart a veritable Bethlehem. Christ is born afresh, and angels are singing with glad voices their carols of good-will and peace. But your experience is very unlike that of other Christian believers, if you do not hear mingling with that melody, and badly breaking it, the murmur of voices pitched in a very different key. Herod's men at arms have been let loose, and are storming up and down the highways and by-ways of the soul, trying

to make away with this new life, to kill the Christ within you. My message to you is a simple one. Be not afraid. That is the whole of it. God is on on your side; He cares as much as you care for that little flame of life; He will not let this gusty tempest quench it, though it threatens it. Be not afraid. It may be that much distress and many sufferings await you. Passion, pride, envy, hatred, malice, false ambition, discontent, jealousy, scorn, vanity, can you possibly expect that when all these have joined hands in one bad determination to kill the Christ within you, can you possibly expect, I say, that there wil be in this Bethlehem of yours no bloodshed and no tears? Yes, there will be much of both. But courage; victory comes at last, and with it peace. By and by some voice will speak to you, as in a happy dream, and say, "Arise, and get you to the land of Israel, the soul's true home. For they are dead which sought the young child's life."

SERMON XVI.

EARNINGS.

"*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*"—II THESSALONIANS iii. 10.

THE words have a harsh sound, have they not? We do not on the moment perceive that a great principle lies hidden in them. They seem to embody only a rule or regulation; they suggest the discipline of the workhouse, and would not look out of place as a motto on the cover of some manual of charity organization, or hand-book of directions for visitors of the poor.

But there is much more in the words than this, although this, very likely, was to a certain extent the complexion they bore in the first instance.

The primitive Christian communities were not made up of rich people to any great extent; they were chiefly composed of men and women who had to earn their own living, if they did earn it, by hard work.

St. Paul had learned that in one of these communities, the Church at a place called Thessalonica, there were a number of persons who took advantage of the gospel doctrine of brotherly kindness, by making it a cover for idleness. We hear, he says, that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.

A touch of satire here; for the intimation clearly was that the bread these people were eating was not their own, since their own efforts had not earned it. So then it is plain enough that in their earliest application the words of the text did have the character of a disciplinary rule. But this does not make any the less true what I said about the value of the precept as covering and enfolding a general principle. If any of you upon hearing the text announced inferred that the remarks to follow would be addressed only to the wage-earning class, so called, the inference was a hasty one. The face of society has altered amazingly since the day when Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonian Christians. The constituency of the Church is a very different thing from what it was then. As was predicted it would do, the Gospel-net has "gathered of every

kind," and to-day not the laboring class only, but literally all sorts and conditions of men are found professing and calling themselves Christians. But has the maxim "if any will not work, neither should he eat," lost nothing of its value on this account? Or are we at liberty to set it aside as a commandment obsolete, a law virtually repealed by the change that has come over all things since those early days?

In one sense, Yes. Nobody would assert for the Church authorities of our time the right literally to enforce, in individual cases, such an ordinance as this. Indeed, St. Paul himself had no intention of urging a general application of his rule to all the citizens of Thessalonica. Probably the eating he had reference to meant support out of the common sustenation fund of the Church. As to how that ought to be used, he had a perfect right to speak with authority. Part of his apostolic duty was to keep the drones from living upon the accumulated treasures of the hive. And it was with this end in view, no doubt, that he laid down his rule. He was not undertaking to prescribe a police-regulation for Thessalonica as a town; only an ordinance for the special community over which he exercised a lawful supervision, namely, the Church.

Again I ask, therefore, what was the principle on

which this rule "If any will not work, neither should he eat," was founded? What great and changeless truth, binding through all time and upon all classes, lay beneath and behind the apostle's edict? A truth, a principle, I answer—that may be stated thus: It is God's will that every one of his creatures, in some way or other, should earn his own living; or, in other words, render by usefulness an equivalent for support.

With the possible and conceivable exceptions to this principle we will not now concern ourselves. Were we to do so, we might find out that what seem to be exceptions are not really such. But we will waive that for the present; what we have before us now is the principle itself, the broad, general principle that a support ought somehow to be earned.

All that contributes to man's sustenance, except the air he breathes, comes out of the soil, and the process of getting it out involves labor.

Man banished from Paradise had set before him the task of subduing the earth, a task with which he is still busily occupied. To allege that in a perfectly equitable state of things all persons would be directly engaged with their hands in the general effort to make the earth yield her increase is absurd. But to say that every person not thus at work ought in some way to be the helper of those who are, is far from

being absurd, for it is the truth of God. The man who feeds upon the common stock of the world's produce without in any way exerting himself to lighten the burden of the world's toil breaks an everlasting commandment. No penalty may overtake him here and now; nevertheless, the fact remains,—a thing that ought to have been done has been left undone, a sanction of universal obligation has been set at naught, an idle life has been led.

In the end these things go not unpunished. They right themselves. Lapses have their penalty as well as acts. Do not misapprehend my meaning. I have specified no particular kind of service and affirmed of it, unless you render that, unless you plough or plant or reap, you are eating unearned bread. That is the folly of a few enthusiasts. There are ten thousand forms of helpfulness, wholly aside from manual labor. Possibly you are living a life that may fairly be called a life of enforced idleness. It is not your choice but your necessity. Perhaps a smile or a cheerful word is the utmost you have to contribute to the lightening of the general burden; nevertheless, by all means contribute that; and if your heart be set on equity, if your conscience be one that is awake to duty, you will eat your bread with the better grace and with the more peace of mind for having done so. For if any will not work—that is to

say, has not the disposition to be helpful—neither ought he, in pure equity, to eat. Service is the condition of sustenance. "She hath done what she could."

People of small means are compelled to recognize this truth. The acknowledgment of it is forced upon them. They earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and the very act of doing so is a continual reminder of the reasonableness of what our text teaches. But it is evidence of unusual nobility of character when one whose wealth exempts him from labor is seen voluntarily taking up some line of active service purely for the sake of being useful. One of the reasons why it is so hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven is just this, his riches deceive him into a forgetfulness of the fact that in God's sight he is just as really bound to make himself helpful, to put his shoulder to the common burden, as any other man. The kingdom of heaven is based on the principle of co-operation; that is one of the unrepealable articles of its constitution. The citizens of that kingdom are members one of another, none of them liveth to himself alone, whatever is done is done with an eye to the general good, if one suffers all suffer, if one rejoices all rejoice. How can anybody enter into a kingdom of this sort carrying with him the notion that he belongs to an exempted class, that

however necessary it may be for the poverty-stricken to slave and toil, his better fortune makes any special exertion needless for him? How, I ask, can such a one pass through the gate, how enter into the city? He cannot, at least not until he has unlearned his trust in riches, until he has mastered the alphabet of fellowship and brotherhood, until he has confessed that because he is a man he owes it to all men to be helpful. Failing to do that, he sees the needle's eye confront him still.

Let us glance at some of the practical applications of this principle in every-day life. Playing for money is said to be becoming common in good society. Well, why not? Christian moralists are often challenged, and with not a little confidence on the part of the challenger, to show reason why the practice of gaming should be denounced as wickedness. May a man not do what he will with his own? it is triumphantly asked. And if he has a right to destroy or throw away his property when the whim takes him, may he not innocently enough risk the loss of that same property at the gaming table? To which this answer may be made, that it is not the losing of money so much as it is the winning of money at games of chance that makes the practice of them blameworthy. That is worth thinking of.

The fact that a man finds himself winning wealth

without effort has of itself a tendency to demoralize him, and it has this tendency for the simple reason that the man's eyes are dulled to the truth that the means of living ought to be earned. What is more healthy or creditable than the feeling which asserts itself in every right-minded young man as he comes of age, "Now I ought to be earning something. I have been dependent long enough. It is time to think of becoming self-supporting." What is this but the waking up of the young man's mind and heart to the reality of the truth set forth in our text? And it is an all-sufficient argument against gaming that it inevitably breaks down, in those who addict themselves to it, this high manly estimate of what God expects of all of us in the matter of bearing our several portions of the world's great burden of toil. If it be urged that the same reasoning would apply to the accumulation of wealth by what is known in business life as speculation, my reply would be that it is for men of business themselves to determine how far such application of the argument would be just, and for them to say what inferences ought to follow. Preachers are in duty bound not to go astray in the enunciation of principles. They may very easily go astray in the attempt to apply principles, unless they are careful to confine themselves to matters with respect to which they are either conscious of being thoroughly

informed, or else are well assured that among all good people competent to have an opinion a reasonable approach to unanimity exists. There is such a unanimity with respect to games of chance. And if the principle of the text applies to them, it must apply to such forms of commercial venture as are close akin to them; but precisely which these forms of commercial venture are I do not undertake to say, lest I should be seeming to instruct those who might more properly instruct me. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; but if any be determined that others shall support him without his rendering them, either directly or indirectly, any return of service, let him be assured that such is not the will of God, and that the bread he eats, though it may be his in law, in equity is forfeit; for there is no such thing rightly as the bread of idleness; idleness owns no bread. The husbandman that laboreth must be first-partaker of the fruits.

But the principle of our text has wider applications still. One of the commonest of temptations, especially with young people, is the temptation to trust for success in life to natural quickness or agility of mind, rather than to steady, industrious, patiently-sustained effort. That vague, indeterminate word "genius" has much to answer for in the record of spoilt characters and shipwrecked lives. Deceiving himself

with the notion that owing to his exceptional endowments he has no need to take the trouble that ordinary people have to take in order to accomplish what they attempt, many a young man has found out to his cost, and too late, that had he been content to work as others worked he might have eaten with them at the tables of their success.

The parable of the talents is sadly misinterpreted when taken to mean that because a man has been amply equipped at the outset he may spare himself exertion, and do only such things as it costs him no effort to do. From all that is said, it would seem that the man with the ten talents worked as hard as the man with the five. Each doubled what had been given him. The turning the ten to twenty was as great an achievement and involved as much effort as the turning of the five to ten. The two men worked on different levels but with equal conscientiousness. The "Well done, good and faithful servant," was not the reward of genius, it was the reward of toil, in both cases. The man with the one talent was blamed, not for having only one talent, but for making no effort to increase and improve upon what he had received. He had refused to be one of the earners, and in the Judgment that was his condemnation.

Whatever you undertake, young men, put your very best work into it. I do not affirm that it will be im-

possible to win praise for poor work, but such praise will inevitably come under one of two heads; either it will be insincere praise rendered hypocritically, and therefore not worth the having, or it will be ignorant praise, given under a misapprehension, praise of which the true account must be that it never was fairly earned.

Praise is one of the foods of the soul. To desire it is as natural to us as to desire bread. But let us be content to earn it by genuine service. If any will not work, neither ought he to eat. It is a small matter whether a work be done conspicuously or inconspicuously, whether the field of our endeavors be a broad or narrow one, whether there be many or few to applaud,—what really makes the difference is the character of the work. Is it good work through and through? Will it stand examination? Is it the best of its kind, or as near an approach to being the best of its kind as we have it in our power to make it? These are the questions of real moment. Interrogation of this sort is the fire that is to try every man's work at the last. Even while I speak, there seem to rise up before my eyes two distinct visions of the coming age, the years that lie immediately before us. They are in sharp contrast. The atmosphere of one of them is luminous with gladness. Over the other broods a cloud heavy and threatening.

The first is the picture of the Republic as it might be, were every dweller in it held and swayed by the supreme purpose to seek the common good of all. Cruelties, wrongs, oppressions have no place, because hatred, malice and envy are not there to prompt them. Social heart-burnings and class jealousies have been banished, or rather have quietly ceased to exist, because when all honest occupations have been discovered to be equally essential to the general welfare no one class can be persuaded to say to another, I have no need of thee. There is no limit to the variety of the ways in which wealth is added to the common stock, but there are no dry channels anywhere. From all directions come the streams that make glad this city of God, and all are full. No life is idle, no man, woman, or child useless. All share the work and therefore each is enabled to have lot and portion in the bread that feeds and in the rest that freshens those who have fairly earned both bread and rest.

In the other vision there is no lack of splendor, but it is a splendor sadly diversified by gloom. Luxurious dwellings tower one above another. The power of accumulated wealth asserts itself at every turn. The great avenues are full of magnificence, and yet in the dim background we discern the outline of wretched houses and homes that are no homes, and around the corners of the great buildings gaunt

faces marked with the lines of famine peer out at us, with a furtive, restless look, half-mournful, half-defiant. Over the whole broods continually the heavy thunder-cloud, with now and then an ominous flash breaking from its folds. Do you tell me that these are lying visions,—grossly exaggerated pictures, the one of them altogether too bright, the other altogether too dark, and that the real truth, the actual fact lies somewhere between the two?

But remember that I did not pretend to be speaking of the present, I was looking into the future, considering the time to come, following out in imagination two lines of movement, to see whither they might lead us. That the national life will ever reach either of the two extremes may be in the highest degree improbable but cannot be said to be inconceivable. And not only so,—far as we may be from either the noble Republic of the one vision or the base Republic of the other, it is not to be denied, and ought not to be forgotten, that all the while our general drift, trend, tendency, call it which you will, is towards the one or towards the other. We cannot, as a people, be moving in both directions at once, any more than the mercury in the barometer can be rising and falling at the same instant. The people as a people is at any given moment, is at this moment, approaching the better or approaching the worse of the two conditions;

we are making in the direction of the good or of the bad. We cannot escape this solemn fact by saying that part of the people are moving towards the light and part of them towards the dark. The good and bad elements in the life of a great nation cannot thus part asunder. The bubble of air in the spirit-level never divides, as a whole it goes in one direction or as a whole in the other. A nation's life has this same globular character, this same completeness in itself.

We look out over the immense reaches of this broad continent. We see the streams of life pouring into it here at the entrance gate. We watch the populations spreading with a rapidity wholly unexampled in history over regions which only, yesterday, were a wilderness, and we ask ourselves, almost in alarm, what is to come of all this? What is to save this eager, impetuous tide of human life from setting in the wrong direction? What guarantee have we of the good Republic, what safeguard against the base Republic? The firm, steady voice of experience replies, There is but one guarantee, one safeguard, the Spirit of Christ. Helpfulness, co-operation, the respect of class for class, these are the outcome of the religion of the Cross. Neither Communism nor Nihilism can give them to us. The Spirit of Christ can and will.

SERMON XVII.

SINNING IN PARTNERSHIP.

"*And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.*" —MATTHEW viii. 34.

IT is a terrible thing when the people of a whole city unite in an impious prayer. That was what these people did; they came out in a body and besought Jesus that He would depart out of their neighborhood, or "coasts," as the old English phrase has it. What were the facts? In the outskirts of the city, a district that seems to have been used as a place of burial, Christ had just been manifesting his miraculous power in a very startling way. He had relieved, as by royal word of command, two demoniacs of the fearful companionship into which their sins had brought them, and by transferring the bad spirit from a human to a brutish lodgement had been the means of driving a whole herd of swine violently into the sea. The keepers of the swine naturally enough had gone at once into the city and told their

grievance. And now the question with the Gergesenes is, What are we to think of this new-comer? He is a strange sort of guest. He seems to bless with one hand and curse with the other. He has healed those two old neighbors of ours, to be sure, whose case we had supposed hopeless; but at the same time he has shown small respect for the rights of property. It was a shame and mortification to have the poor demoniacs wandering about in wretched despair among the tombs. But then, they cost us nothing and the swine did. The healing of the men has brought us no particular advantage, the destruction of the herd has entailed on us a very real and serious loss. On the whole, then, we conclude that this stranger had better be looked on as an intruder and warned away. His curse is more disadvantageous than his blessing is likely to prove helpful. We can get along without spiritual relief, but what will become of us if we lose our property?

It was in some such way as this, we may be very sure, that the dwellers in this city of Gadara, on the further side of the Sea of Galilee, talked to one another about the question of municipal policy which had been so suddenly and unexpectedly thrust upon them for settlement. The advocates of self-interest got the best of the debate, as is too often the case, although it is not often that we see so complete a tri-

umph of the worse over the better reason as this appears to have been. It was not the greater number of the citizens, it was the "whole city," so we read, that came out to meet Jesus. "And when they saw Him," the text adds, "they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts."

They drove away the Christ in order that they might save the swine. They set aside the prayer of faith that heals the sick, and breathed instead of it the prayer of unbelief that consigned them to the same doom which had befallen their miserable herd. Practically they took up and echoed the cry of the evil spirits that had just been expelled, for the burden of their entreaty was, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us? Depart, we pray thee, depart out of our coasts." The prayer was answered. Jesus did depart, and they were left to their devils and to their swine.

My friends, what is the counterpart of all this in modern life? Have we anything among ourselves that answers to the line of policy taken by the worldly-wise people of that city by the sea? Are prayers like that one of the Gergesenes made now-a-days? and are they answered? These are just the questions which the text opens to us with the utmost directness this morning. The first thought suggested

by the story is the solemn one that it is possible for communities as communities to sin, to transgress the law of righteousness, to incur guilt. And when I say "community," I am anxious to have you understand the word in a very large sense, as comprehending all forms of association under which men are bound together. We are familiar with the thought that governments may do wrong; "national sin" is a common enough expression, but do we remember that what is true of nations is equally true of all the groups, be they smaller or larger, into which human society is broken up? States, cities, towns, villages, manufacturing companies, parishes, corporations, boards of directors, committees, these are all of them the names of bodies or associations which have it in their power to do wrong, to transgress God's will, to sin. And these community-sins, if I may so call them, stand apart by themselves as a special form of wrong doing, and are apt to bring upon those concerned in them a double weight of retribution, for not only is the whole body made to suffer, but each member of the body suffers with it.

When a town as a town, or a parish as a parish, by its own vote and determination does what is wrong, the bad consequences of the evil act are very likely to involve those who disapproved of the unrighteousness along with those who favored it. This is a con-

sequence of the divine law which makes us all members one of another. We cannot escape the workings of that law; it is acting upon us all the time, either for good or evil. When the tone of society is lowered as a result of some deliberate choice to which society has committed itself, every one who belongs to society suffers his own penalty, has to endure his own special share of the deterioration. And even when there has been no deliberate act of choice, but only a gradual and unnoticed sliding into the wrong grooves, it still holds true that all suffer from the lapse, some more severely than others, no doubt, but still all, in a degree, be it more or less.

For the last fifteen or twenty years people's thoughts in this country have been very much engrossed with the subject of crime. Instead of having our interest enlisted in great and beneficent enterprises, or our attention called to good deeds, we are invited every day to study the details of some fresh act of fraud, or malice, or violence. The thieves and the murderers are fast becoming our national heroes, in the sense that the men who absorb most of a nation's attention may be called its heroes. There was a time, within the memory of most of us, when newspapers that had allowed themselves to become purveyors to a bad sort of curiosity were regarded as disreputable, and enjoyed a circulation confined to the criminal class, or to those

in sympathy with the criminal class. To-day our best journals are, to a large extent, chronicles of the details of abominable crime, and in so far as repetition has the power to dull sensitiveness, just so far the consciousness of a shock received is diminished with every latest blow. To consider all the causes that have led to this state of things is beyond my purpose. I merely wish to emphasize now a single one of them, or what I believe to be one of them, namely, our failure to recognize as we ought the solemnity of those decisions, by which people, acting together, commit themselves to one side or the other of a moral question. It is so easy for a man who is on a committee, or a board, or a council of any sort, to say to himself, when passively consenting to some action which in his own heart he feels to be wrong, it is so easy for him to say, "Oh, this is not my fault. I am not to blame; this is the joint act of the whole body. I have no rsponsibility." Who has responsibility? I should like to ask. Is responsibility attached only to those whose consciences are so dull that they cannot see a nice moral distinction, and who therefore ride over it rough-shod without scruple? Nay, is it not rather more really on the shoulders of those who can see, who do know the difference between what is right and wrong, what is honorable and what is base? There may be some of you who think that plain

speech of this sort is out of place in the pulpit. Leave matters of business to men of business, you say, who understand them. But I confess I know not what is the function of the ministers of Him who came to establish righteousness on earth, if it be not to utter God's word against unrighteousness when occasion calls.

Not very long ago, in reading an account of a most audacious bank-robbery, an account in which admiration for the adroitness and skill of the thieves seemed quite to overtop any sense of indignation at their crime, I observed a parenthetical remark, to the effect that probably, in a little while, after the noise of the affair had blown over, some treaty would be made with the burglars, by which the greater part of the money lost could be recovered. What does this mean, if not that there exists among us, by tacit consent, a habit of committing in association a crime which, when committed by an individual, is indictable at common law. In old times, when guilt meant guilt, this willingness to compromise with the perpetrators of crime by money payments used to be called compounding felony.

In what respect does a crime become less a crime when the persons committing it are of the highest respectability and the money interests involved happen to be larger than usual?

Let the prosecuting officer of government see to it that the president and directors of the first bank that is known to engage in any such illegal transaction be presented for trial by the proper court, and we shall begin to see where we stand. Individuals may be the immediate sufferers by such a course, but in the long run, the interests of property as well as of honesty would be better served.

The Gergesenes were frightened by the prospect of present loss, so they voted, without a dissenting voice, to drive away the prophet of righteousness from the gates. Public opinion would not tolerate his presence. What has become of their city? Well, there is something left of it. Here is the account of its present condition given by one who has been there: "The most interesting remains of Gadara are its tombs, which dot the cliffs for a considerable distance round the city. They are excavated in the limestone rock, and consist of chambers of various dimensions, some more than twenty feet square, with recesses in the sides for bodies. The doors are slabs of stone, a few being ornamented with panels, some of which still remain in their places. The present inhabitants of the place are all troglodytes, dwelling in tombs like the poor maniacs of old, and occasionally they are almost as dangerous to the unprotected traveller." This is an eye-witness's

account of the present state of the city, all the inhabitants of which came forth to beseech Jesus that He would depart out of their coasts. What an appropriate retribution! How eloquent those silent ruins of what were once crowded and busy streets! How suggestive those still occupied tombs! What dirge could better suit the desolateness of the place than this from the fifty-second Psalm: "Thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness, and to talk of lies more than righteousness. Therefore shall God destroy thee forever; He shall take thee and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living."

I have been speaking of the power which communities have to sin collectively. Will you dwell with me now a little while on the duty which attaches to all right-minded people of trying to prevent this thing. That tremendous engine, "public opinion," is a machine as intricate as it is powerful, but how is it constructed? It is built up of an almost infinite number of parts, some large, some small, some conspicuous and some out of sight, some rapid in their movements and some slow, all of which working together and conjointly produce a given result. Do you tell me you are perfectly sure that you have no share in forming public opinion? I venture to doubt it. Whoever thinks, and speaks out his thought,

or even looks his thought, he is one wheel, be it ever so little, in that vast enginery which is continually in motion, weaving the varied pattern of our many colored social life.

It was the singular unity of public opinion in the city of the Gergesenes that drove Jesus from their coasts. To that public opinion every one of the city's inhabitants had contributed something, though it may have been ever so little. And so with us; every person now listening does every day cast in either of his abundance or of his penury something to the common treasury of influence. By the words we speak, the opinions we express, the preferences we hint, the disapprovals we venture, the judgments we utter, the votes we cast, we do all of us and every one help to give character to the aggregate of public opinion. How are we to exercise this power of influence as we ought? By always seeking, I reply, as God gives us grace to do so, by always seeking to take the worthiest and highest view of every question that comes before us.

The trouble is we betray one another in this thing. We assume that people in general mean to take a lower view than the highest, and then we silently adapt ourselves to that lower view, for fear of appearing odd or singular, and speak accordingly. Instead of gauging our judgments by the very highest

standard conscience can give us, we are tempted to gauge them by the standard of what we believe to be the average sentiment of people at large, and the result is the formation of a public opinion less lofty than it ought to be, less lofty than it might have been had every one of us spoken out his best instead of his second best thought. But chiefly let us guard against the fatal mistake of those Gergesenes, in estimating everything by money values. "How can He possibly be meaning to do us any good," they argued, "if his very first act is one that involves us in loss?" But gain and loss are relative terms and variable ones. The truth is there are many misfortunes that may happen to a community, be it city or be it church, far more serious than the mere falling off of revenues. For a city to forfeit a hardly earned reputation for industry, honesty and sobriety, is a much more grievous calamity than fire or pestilence. Indeed, temporal reverses often nerve the spirit and strengthen the moral pulse which too much prosperity may have enfeebled.

But the saddest thing about our text is the tremendous contrast between the beginning and the close of it. How beautifully it opens, a whole city going out to meet Jesus, and then to have this fair picture spoilt by the revelation of a low, bad motive, a resolve to repel rather than to welcome the heav-

enly guest, certainly it is very disappointing. But our Saviour's life was full of disappointments of this sort. It was his destiny to be the rejected of men. On his approach to another and a greater city, it seemed at first as if the whole populace were disposed to do Him honor, but presently as large a multitude was shouting, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Let us beware, how we join in this cruel cry. We do join in it whenever we lend our influence to any movement, or sanction by our consent any course of action that makes against the cause of Christ rather than for it. It is an entreating of Christ to depart out of our coasts whenever we allow ourselves in ever so little a matter to put profit before principle, to prefer gain to godliness. The permanence and the stability of all that we value most in our social life, the maintenance of mutual confidence, the preservation of the purity of home, all these, and many other precious possessions akin to these, depend upon our being able to keep Christ within our borders. When He departs out of our coasts these inestimable blessings are certain to go with Him. Let unbelievers rail at the Christian Church as bitterly as they will, let them scoff at its sins of omission and commission, and I will not deny that there is ground for much of their complaint; but do they seriously believe that the world would be the

better, that life would be safer, morals cleaner, and manners more gentle, if that witness to the justice and the holiness of God, his Church, were to be stricken from the face of the earth, annihilated, forgotten, and some combination of trades-unionism and scientific ethics accepted in place of it? It cannot be that any one in his sober senses really thinks so.

That will be indeed a fatal day for modern society if ever the voices of those who would have Christ depart should so far prevail as to secure the accomplishment of the wish; if ever the prayer which was granted of old should be granted now. What if we should, some day, agree to ask Him to depart, and He should comply with the request! Can you imagine a desolation more complete! Think of it. Picture the Christless world rolling on its dismal course through space, no homes of prayer anywhere upon its surface, no gathered congregations lifting the voice of worship, no kneeling suppliants interceding for the sick and the sorrowing, no bread of life, no cup of blessing, no tender ministries of loving care and sympathy, no children taught to say "Our Father," no holy benediction for man and wife, no word of trustful hope for the dying, no utterance of faith in a joyful resurrection over the dead, nothing of all this, but, instead, only one long, hard, selfish struggle to see who shall be richest and who shall be strongest

in a life of which the grave is the acknowledged end. This, nothing better than this, is what it would mean to have Christ take the citizens of this world at their word and depart out of their coasts.

But there is another prayer, the very opposite of this inhospitable one "Depart," and yet like this in that it is capable of expression in a single word, the prayer "Abide." Let us be thankful that while there are so many who are all ready with their "Depart from us," there are still some to whom no petition is more precious than the "Abide with us." Christ will not leave his little flock. His word to them is "Fear not." His promise to them is, "Lo, I am with you alway."

The crowd of people, on that day, went back to their city satisfied with having carried their point. Gadara was safe; they had gotten rid of Christ. The disciples also went their way satisfied, too, for they were still with Him, and He with them. Which of the two sorts of satisfaction do you covet? Which of the two prayers expresses your sincerest wish, "Depart," or "Abide"?

SERMON XVIII.

STEADFAST IN FAITH.

" . . . *the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.*"—COLOSSIANS ii. 5.

THE words are but the fragment of a sentence. I single them out with the express purpose of marking off this one thought from the other thoughts with which it stands associated,—a steadfast faith.

Steadfastness is a quality that everybody respects. As an epithet the word "steadfast" used formerly to be assigned to inanimate objects as well as to persons,—a steadfast foundation, the steadfast earth; but there seems to have sprung up a feeling that the word is too noble a one to be wasted upon things, and that it ought to be reserved for beings who have the consciousness of a purpose and enjoy the exercise of a will. One chief reason why steadfastness commands our admiration is to be sought in the fact that a variety of attractive qualities go to make it what it is. We may call it a composite virtue, an ornament of the soul wrought out of grouped and clustered graces.

Strength, courage, patience, all three of these enter into the composition of steadfastness. The weak cannot be steadfast, they are like the chaff which the wind scattereth, they have no weight, they keep no foothold. The cowardly cannot be steadfast, when the battle turns against them they turn with it, they pluck up the standard, desert the guns, fly the field. The hasty cannot be steadfast, for though both strength and courage be theirs, if they have no patience to wait, no endurance, no staying power, these deficiencies are as fatal to their steadfastness as if they themselves were weaklings or poltroons. We cannot wonder, then, at the admiration which a virtue so comprehensive as steadfastness commands; strength, courage, patience make a braid of excellencies to which each single strand contributes a special value. "A threefold cord," says the proverb, "is not quickly broken."

This morning, our special interest lies in the connection between steadfastness and faith. As a help towards getting the matter well in hand let us remind ourselves of another New Testament saying so close akin to this one of our text as to seem at first sight almost its precise equivalent, but which, when looked at closely, will show a difference highly suggestive. I refer to an exhortation in the first of St. Peter's epistles, in which Christian disciples engaged in con-

flict with temptation are urged to be steadfast in the faith. "The steadfastness of faith," "steadfastness in the faith,"—can there be any difference between these two? It would seem not; they sound very much alike. And yet the one is by no means a repetition of the other, as we shall see.

To be steadfast in our faith in Christ means to be firm and unshaken in the confidence we feel in Him as a person worthy of trust.

The Christian religion is built upon a belief that Jesus Christ told the truth in all the matters upon which He uttered Himself. His discourse, as we know, touched upon a great many subjects. He spoke of God, of the soul, of Himself, of us, of the future which shall be when all is over with the world.

The fascination of his teaching from the very first lay in the fact that it covered ground quite beyond the reach of unassisted discovery. He matched with answers, questions men had been asking themselves and one another ever since the dawn of history. In these high regions of instruction, He did not attempt to prove, He quietly asserted the truth. He gave his message, He spoke his tidings from the other world, and was content. It was open to men, as it has been ever since, to believe or to disbelieve. If they chose to contradict Him, they could do so. There was nothing to forbid. He made no attempt to

argue them over to his side by dint of superior logical ability. He did not say—Listen and let me demonstrate to you the soundness of my premises, the certainty of my conclusions. Nothing of this sort; He simply said,—Thus it is; so it shall be;—and there He left it. No thunderbolt struck dead the man who ventured to dissent. Wonderful to tell, people not a few were found willing to believe Him, to take Him at his word; and what is more wonderful still, the thing has been going on from those days to these, and probably at no one time in the past were there ever on the earth so many people as there are at this moment ready to affirm of Jesus Christ, "What he says is true. We trust Him." And yet it is all, when we come to look at it and examine it, nothing but personal confidence, nothing in the world but that. What an all-conquering persuasiveness there must have been about the Son of Mary thus in the first instance to have drawn belief towards Himself as He did! What a masterful grasp He laid upon those inner and hidden forces that sway the heart! He had no need to prop his affirmation upon authorities. Reference and citation entered but rarely into his speech. What He said carried with it a sanction of its own. Infallibility had not to be decreed to him by vote of Council. Authority sufficient for the purpose breathed from the lip that shaped the words, and has orbed itself about

those words and clung to them all through the Christian centuries, as the atmosphere cleaves to the earth in her long circuit through the empty fields of space. They still compel attention, those sayings so unlike all sayings else, still win assent without effort. To this day we trust Him, take Him at his word.

So much for faith in what He said,—but that is not all. Christ presented Himself to the people of that day as something more than a teacher, He showed Himself a helper also. Those about Him felt that He was to be looked to not merely for what He could tell, but for what He could and would do. He came to reveal the power of God as well as the truth of God. Those who were in trouble, distress, peril sought at his hand relief, as at his lips they had sought counsel, and it was not withheld. They obtained what they asked for. The eyes of the blind were opened, the lepers cleansed, the dead raised. You tell me these things do not happen now-a-days. True, they do not, but unless it were believed that things far better do happen, that spiritual blessings are received from the hand of the Saviour of men, and that gifts of healing still are his, manifested now for the cure of the soul as then for the comfort of the body—unless, I say, this were believed, Christ's religion would not stay long among us. It has not been a respect for Christ as a teacher of religious truth that has kept the nations

steadfastly faithful to Him, but confidence in Him as one to whom power belongs, a Saviour equal to the saving task, a minister of help.

So much for faith in its aspect of belief in one who speaks with authority, trustful confidence in the person himself, his willingness and ability to lift, to shield, to lead, to strengthen.

Turn now to St. Peter's phrase, so like St. Paul's in sound, while yet in reality pointing to another thought. "The faith," that is St. Peter's word, "steadfast in the faith." Observe how this differs from, while, at the same time, it is perfectly consistent with what the text says about the steadfastness of faith. By "the faith" is undoubtedly intended some compact, easily recognized and well-remembered statement summing up the chief things which a Christian, in virtue of his being a Christian, ought to receive as true and stand by with a loyal courage. It is not likely that "the faith" was, in the early Church, tied to one particular form of words; indeed, we know that the contrary was the fact, and that among the primitive Christians the wording of the Creed varied more or less according to locality. But it was not a variation that affected the substance of the faith. The Creed we have said together in our morning worship is one of a number of similar formularies which we know to have been in use throughout

western Christendom in early times. It is very easy, even for an unpracticed eye, to trace the connection between it and the still simpler form of words into which our Saviour bade his disciples baptize the nations. It sums up within brief compass what we most need to know of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. More really, perhaps, than any other creed in existence it has a claim to be recognized as being pre-eminently "the faith." It is one of the most hopeful signs of the times, and promises well for the coming day of re-union among Christians, that so many leading minds among the religious denominations of the land are looking towards this ancient symbol, with freshened interest and kindled reverence. It is seen to have singular advantages, which the longer and more intricate confessions of faith lack, and which from the nature of the case they can never hope to acquire. Of no other formulary of belief can such antiquity be predicated, and that of itself is a signal point in its favor. The creed that has worn best in the past may fairly be said to have the best prospect for vigorous life in the future. We are the more likely to prove steadfast in a faith of which it can be said that itself has steadfastly endured.

Moreover, consider how much of embarrassment and difficulty is escaped simply by returning to this ancient form of sound words. Only think how large

a proportion of the angry controversies of the day are simply left on one side, as matters about which people can afford to differ and may safely be allowed to have their own opinions, when once we make up our mind to build religion on these few but momentous verities that make the substance of the Apostles' Creed. Moreover, it is a creed that is full of Christ. The modern creeds have been too full of philosophy, burdened with a load of particulars with respect to which it could never have been expected by the Lord Jesus that his little ones, as He so graciously called the poor and ignorant among his disciples, would be informed. I do not mean to intimate that deep reasoning upon such themes as the divine counsels and the eternal decrees of election and predestination are wholly out of place in religion. Flippant critics by the thousand are today sneering at Calvin and Augustine, yes, even at St. Paul himself, who have never mastered even the rudiments of the knowledge which these moulders of the thoughts of generations had at their fingers' ends; but while it is right and well that such high topics of discourse should exercise the mind, and keep alive the intellectual vigor of the Christian Church, it is neither right nor well that far-fetched conclusions with respect to them should be put forward for the acceptance of disciples, as if they were part and parcel of the faith.

I have been trying to make clear, with, perhaps, only an imperfect measure of success, the two-fold character of Christian faith, trying to show how according as we look at it from one or another point of sight, faith is either assent to an unproved statement made to us by some one believed to be of competent authority or else confiding trust in a living person who promises some sort of help.

I desire now to go on and show, briefly, the bearing of these thoughts upon certain noticeable facts in the religious life of our times. I have in mind more especially the religious life of the English-speaking peoples of the world, and, more especially still, that of our venerable Mother Church of England, and our own Protestant Episcopal Church in America. In this religious life there have been noticeable, for the last fifty years, two distinct tendencies, seemingly independent of each other, identified with different leaders, represented by different publications, and often thought to be mutually inimical, even if not mutually destructive. One of these tendencies has been to emphasize the sacramental side of religion, to lay great stress on Holy Baptism as the initial point of the spiritual life; and to exalt the Holy Communion as being at once the highest act of Christian worship and the most precious of all the channels or

media through which the grace or help of God is carried to the soul.

Contemporaneous with this quickened zeal for sacraments, and with the effort to restore the Lord's Supper to the foremost place among the observances of religion, has been a movement of another sort, a movement to sift accredited beliefs of all sorts in the sieve of a most thorough criticism, with a view to finding out what is really of the essence of Christian truth, what is that core and heart of all the creeds which must be clung to at all hazards if we would show ourselves, in our day and generation, able to hold fast that which from former days and former generations has been handed down to us in trust; if, in a word, we would be "steadfast in the faith." These two movements have often been regarded, I repeat, as antagonistic to one another. It has been taken for granted that they could not both of them be serving the same end. The adherents of the sacramental advance have questioned the motives of those who were seeking so eagerly to mark off the essentials of the Christian faith from the non-essentials, and have felt disposed to charge them with a drift towards liberalism and free thought; while to very many of the other company or school the sacramentalists have seemed to be moving rapidly in the direction of the worship and the theology of the Church of Rome.

But may it be that all the while both drifts or movements have been in the main efficacious to the furthering of the Gospel. I set aside extremes on both sides, and speak of the main current in both cases. Very likely there may have been much Romanizing in the one direction, and much rationalizing in the other. But, waiving that question, only look and see how perfectly the two movements, each being taken and judged at a friendly, not an unfriendly estimation, supplement each other.

The sacramentalist's course is a protest against the notion that faith is wholly and only an assent of the mind to certain dogmas or authoritative statements of truth. "No," he cries, "Christ is not a form of words. You do not bring Him to the soul by saying over the Creed, no matter how correctly. Christ is a person, a living, loving, active, and, what is more, present Being. To assure us of this He appointed these institutes called sacraments. His purpose was that his followers should have an opportunity of meeting Him, holding direct intercourse with Him, that they should be fed, nourished, strengthened by life communicated." To men looking at the matter in this light, the steadfastness of their faith in Christ has seemed wonderfully aided and guaranteed by this provision of Holy Communion. The sacrament has been to them their assurance that religion was something more than a

theology, that it meant personal conversance with the actual Saviour, the veritable Jesus Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, and suffered under Pontius Pilate, the friend and helper of his disciples to this day, even though now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thus have the two movements unconsciously conspired to help forward the common cause of Christian truth, the one by defining the faith and separating from it all that was not of it at the beginning; the other by insisting that to hold the Creed is blessing of small moment, of itself considered, unless we can go on to hold communion with Him of whom the Creed is but the verbal shrine, a house of words rather than house of God.

Dear friends, we have need in these times both of steadfast faith, that is to say, unwavering confidence in Christ, and of steadfastness in the faith, that is to say, a settled loyalty to the old Creed that has made Christendom what it is. The one steadfastness will grow out of and follow upon the other. If the love of Christ is in our hearts, if the spell of his divine enchantment has fallen upon and taken possession of our souls, nothing will be more natural than that we should stand firmly by and guard with jealous care the venerable form of words in which our belief in Him, as being what He is, finds utterance.

But we have need of sleepless watchfulness. The temper of the times, admirable in many respects, is yet a little too friendly to fickleness, too easily disposed to condone that variableness of mind which Holy Scripture censures. We are in danger, every one of us, of falling from our steadfastness. We need the grace of God to keep us firm and true.

When St. Paul wrote the words of our text, he was living among soldiers, a prisoner of state, lodged in the camp of the pretorian guard at Rome. Something of the soldierly spirit manifests itself in his style, and his metaphor is military This steadfastness which he commends is that very quality which the skilled general most values in his troops. It was a certain impervious solidity, a firm-set, not-to-be-broken frontage, that made the Roman legion the conqueror of the world. It is this, also, that in times past has made the Church of Christ on earth invincible. Her members have had a faith, and have clung to it. In the midst of a world full of shifting sights and changeful sounds, with many a wind of doctrine whistling by, the Church has stood, not undisturbed, indeed, but undismayed and steadfast, strong in her Founder's assurance of perpetuity.

It behooves us, the Christians of these days, to see to it, that, now our time is come and we are at the front, there be no wavering along the line, no panic,

no base retreat. If in anything we have demanded more of men than He, our Master, bade us do, so much let us yield, but no more. The King's banner floats from the rising ground around which we stand massed. Woe be to us, if in our day hostile hands are suffered to drag His honor in the dust.

SERMON XIX.

JOYFUL THROUGH HOPE.

"*Rejoicing in hope.*"—ROMANS xii. 12.

BY general consent, St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is acknowledged to be the most intensely doctrinal of all the books of the Bible. I say "doctrinal" using the word in its modern sense of "theological," in distinction from "practical." In point of fact, doctrine, as we all know, means neither more nor less than instruction, and whatever teaches us anything is so far forth doctrinal. But from signifying instruction of any sort the word has come to mean instruction of an exclusively religious character, and not only so, but the definition has been still further narrowed down until now we commonly understand by doctrine only such instruction in religion as has to do with general principles, abstract truths and the like, as contrasted with the duties, responsibilities and obligations that enter into and make up the actual conduct of life. And yet, singularly enough as it might seem, here we find in

the very heart of this theological treatise, the Epistle to the Romans, blooming out like the famous flower-bed framed in ice that turns itself to the sun in a far recess of one of the Swiss glaciers, here we find a passage of unmistakable moral counsel as beautiful after its sort as anything in the New Testament.

What does it suggest to us? That the writer was better than his creed? That, like an athlete pausing to take breath, the tired reasoner broke away momentarily from his logic to gain refreshment by a long, deep inhalation of fresh air?

Not so much either of these, I am disposed to think, as the fact that there is a closer connection between creed and conduct than many are willing to concede, that the old proverb, "As a man thinketh, so is he," is a sound one; that the ice and snow of a severely pure doctrine have their place in the spiritual economy alongside of the flowers and fruitage of a beautiful life; and that to St. Paul's apprehension no great gulf lay fixed between lofty and reverent conceptions of the divine majesty and simple and wholesome teachings with respect to the duties we owe to one another. Against the modern disposition wholly to dissociate high thinking from right living, this twelfth chapter to the Romans stands as a perpetual protest.

Thus much by way of general preface; let us turn to particulars. Of the many things enjoined or com-

mended in this truly noble lesson, such as brotherly affection, patience, hospitality, generosity, the unrevengeful spirit, compassion, simple-heartedness and the like, we find the three words I have taken for a text—"Rejoicing in hope."

Joy born of hope is here set before us as one of the privileges of the Christian life. I say advisedly privileges rather than obligations, for it is not possible to oblige people to be joyful. Joy is a feeling that if it come at all must bubble up in the heart like a spring, and fountains cannot be extemporized at will. Their sources are underground; their channels of supply hidden. In the case of which it is written that he smote the rock and the waters gushed forth, we have what was exceptional and miraculous; it was the hand of a prophet of God that held the rod. Man cannot deal thus with the coldness and the hardness of his own heart. He can supplicate the touch of God, he can pray that the blessing of joyousness may be suffered to come into and refresh his life, but to compel himself to be joyful, that is not in his power. It is allowed him to make merry, if he care to do so, for merriment is something that falls within the range of effort, at least to a degree; but joy he can neither make nor buy.

Nevertheless, there is a pathway to joy with which it is well that we should be acquainted, seeing that

for those who have outlived the natural joyousness of childhood it is the only available line of approach;—I mean Christian hope. You may say that it is as impossible to compel ourselves to be hopeful as it is to compel ourselves to be joyous, but is that quite so? May not hope be stimulated and cultivated in ways in which it is impossible to force joy? There is, we know, such a thing as a reasonable hope, and out of a hope that has good reasons to give, it may be that joy will easily spring up. Hope is the soil in which the seed of joy is sown. We help the growth of the plant by feeding it through the medium of the soil, and in no other way can we possibly help it. A child might fancy that he could give the seed a start by breaking it open and so allowing the germ within an easier escape from its prison, but a man knows better. He knows that the seed must grow according to its appointed law, and that only indirectly can he, be he ever so eager to do so, either aid or hasten the unfolding process. Be it our effort, then, to find good reasons for being hopeful; having done this, we shall have done all in our power to ensure the upspringing in our hearts of joy, for joy is the daughter of hope.

The very fact that hoping is such a natural thing is of itself a reason why in the true religion we should look to see much account taken of hope. We live from day to day by dint of looking forward to a

future which promises to be in some one point or other better than our present. From the child at school looking forward to vacation, on to the man who, weary with the burdens of active life, looks forward to the day when he shall be able to retire from business and enjoy his hardly-earned competency, all through the long stretch of years, hope is the sustaining power. The sick man waiting for the fever to turn, the prisoner and the captive looking forward to the far day of release, the innocent sufferer from slander or misrepresentation abiding patiently that triumphant moment when his righteousness shall be made clear as the noon-day, these all of them are kept alive by hope. Rob them of this secret of endurance, and it will be all over with them. "Man," it has been said, "can exist on wonderfully little hope, but not entirely without it."

Hope as an instinct being thus a universal possession, the common heritage of the whole family of man, we should naturally expect to find it playing an important part in religion. More than that, we should anticipate as a feature of true religion that it would set before the eye of the soul some object of attainment plainly worthy of the most intense and eager hope. This is precisely what the religion of the Bible does. That religion is from first to last a forward-looking, anticipating one. There is always set

before these men of God something to be hoped for. There is one continual pressing toward the mark. Promise is the golden word all along through the generations. It dates back to the very beginning, this gospel of encouragement. No sooner has Paradise been lost than Paradise regained begins to loom. The burden of prophecy is a better time coming. Men are bidden to be of good cheer, to look up and to lift up their heads, seeing that some redemption, some exodus from bondage, some marvellous passage of Red Sea or Jordan River is forever drawing nigh. Two principal objects of hope seem to have furnished those who lived in Old Testament days with their motive for endurance, one of these was a place, the other a person. The promised land, the promised Messiah or King, these were the unattained but not unattainable ends that made it seem to the elder people of God worth their while to live, to strive, to suffer, to press on. Watch carefully the stream of prophecy as it runs through the Old Testament and you will see that these are the two main currents, one sets towards the thought of a promised land in which it is to be their joy to dwell, a land broad and quiet and peaceable; the other towards a promised person, a hero, a leader, a king by the side of whom all who before have wielded sword or sceptre, whether as captains, judges, monarchs, will dwindle into insignificance; some son

of David whom David's self shall willingly call Lord.

Take the first of these two objects of hope that stand out so prominently from the pages of old prophecy, the land. Consider how far back the thought is carried. We find it at the very roots of Hebrew history. The origin of the Jews as a people dates from the call of Abraham; and what was the call of Abraham? It was a summons addressed to one individual man to quit his friends and kindred and to start out upon a lonely pilgrimage in search of a promised country or land. Get thee out of thy country, the message ran, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house into a land that I will show thee. Such was the call of Abraham;—a strange, mysterious event pregnant with the destinies of whole civilizations yet to come. And what a marvellous instance it proved to be of the pertinacity of a hope once authorized by a competent voice. Never from that day onward was the dream of the promised country lost out of sight. Doubtless for long periods the vision was dimmed, the hope lay in abeyance, but ever under the white ashes smouldered the quick and glowing embers of an expectation that had never wholly died. Whether in the house of bondage they languished or in the wilderness wandered, it was impossible for them wholly to forget that home, real home, lay in the

future. For a people to feel a passionate attachment to their country, to the very soil itself, is nothing wonderful or strange. In ancient times the Greeks, in modern days the Swiss, have been the recognized, though by no means the solitary, exemplars among peoples of this instinctive love of fatherland. But the noticeable, the wholly unique feature of the Jewish history is that the love of that particular people, the Hebrew, was through long periods of time lavished on a country the soil of which their feet had never trodden, a land which was wholly one of promise, and which their eyes had not even distantly beheld. It was a happy thought on the part of a missionary who not long ago published his observations on the geography and antiquities of Palestine, to entitle his work "The Land and the Book," for surely never since national life began on earth were Land and Book so intimately knit together as the Land and the Book to which we are accustomed to prefix the epithet Holy.

But, as I have already remarked, there was another and still more sacred object of hope kept in view by the prophets and seers of that elder day. They gazed with absorbed interest into the cloudy future to catch the outline of that far country promised to them, but it was with a look even more eager that they sought to descry the features of Him who was to come to be their true and perfect sovereign,

the King of all the earth. Passionate as was their love for their country, it was not comparable in warmth to their hope of the Messiah. The thought of seeing the land that was very far off was gladness to them, but to behold the King in his beauty would be, they felt sure, a vision of glory more entrancing still. They lived in ceaseless expectation of the Messiah who should make Jerusalem not merely the joy but the throne of the whole earth; they waited for the King. Thus were they in their day children of hope, men who were in search of and in waiting for the place and the person that had been promised them.

Now what did Christ do and say in the face of all this traditional expectation? Did He reverse the hope, annul the promise, rudely and violently silence the note of prophecy? Far from it. He simply took the whole thing, hope, promise, prophecy, and all, up onto a higher level. Not to quench, but to elevate and enlarge both forms of the inherited hope had He come into the world. "Not to destroy but to fulfil" was his leading thought. Men were still to seek a land hidden in the future, still to live in the glad, proud hope of the coming of one who should be of kings the King. Only here the difference lay, for Palestine henceforth was to be substituted the better country to be known as heaven, and for the conquering King of Jews, the peace-making King of men.

I do not know how it strikes you, for I cannot tell how far I am succeeding in bringing out the thought as it lies in my own mind, but I feel confident that if this idea of the Christian hope as being the ennobled and transfigured form of an ancient promise which was already existent among men when our Lord came, which indeed may fairly be said to have been, with more or less distinctness, cherished from the very dawn of history, I feel confident, I say, that if this idea of the continuity of the Christian hope with the still earlier hope of Abraham and of Moses and of David and of Isaiah can once get a firm lodgement in the mind, it will prove a wonderful strengthener of religious confidence, a firm buttress of the faith under which we were brought up, by which we seek to live, in which we desire to die. There is a grandeur about this aspect of the matter which carries with it its own proof. Satisfied of the existence of a world-long hope such as has been described, we lean less heavily upon the artificial props sometimes offered us under the name of evidences of Christianity. Brought into the near presence of so august a fact of history as this, we experience much the same sense of freshly acquired certitude that comes to a traveller who, having doubted whether the heavy mass he saw on the horizon was cloud or mountain, by-and-by finds himself close enough to the reality to see and know that it is

mountain and not cloud. It cannot be, we say to ourselves, that so magnificent a tradition, so marvellously guarded, and from generation to generation faithfully preserved, is a deceit. God has not fed his children on the food of falsehood, nor has "the kindly light" which all these years has guided the Church of God on its long pilgrimage been a delusion, an *ignis fatuus* luring its followers on to their destruction. The promise must be a credible promise, the hope a reasonable hope. Over this good ground thus well prepared, scatter broadcast the seed-grain of joy, there is every reason to believe that in due time it will spring up and bear abundant harvest.

This then is one strong argument in favor of the reasonableness of the Christian's hope, namely, its early origin and long continuance on earth. A strange shrub or vine seen for the first time in a neighbor's garden of a pleasant day in June, when all the surrounding conditions are favorable to plant life, may well leave us in some doubt as to whether or not it be an exotic, a stranger and foreigner which the first touch of our northern winter will chill to death. But no such misgivings trouble us with respect to the hardy, much-enduring woodbine or climbing rose which through all weathers, year in and year out, has clung to its trellis before our eyes ever since we can

remember. We are confident that that is a native of our rugged soil, and may be counted upon to survive both frost and thaw. The Christian's hope has this same evidence of vitality, this same guarantee of permanence. The roots run deep down into humanity itself. It is as old as we are.

Dear friends, would it not, in view of all this, be to the credit of our religion, or perhaps I ought to say to the credit of our sincerity as men professing to believe the Gospel, if there were to be manifest in our daily lives a little larger measure than is found there of Christian joy? Our hope being reasonable, our joy ought to be abundant. Perhaps the reason why the joy is stinted, why the waters of gladness run so languidly may be this: we do not realize what an abyss of utter blackness and darkness we escape by having a Christian hope at all. If we did realize it, we could not help being joyous if we tried. Instead of seeing, what is undoubtedly the fact, that our choice lies between two alternatives, one of them hope, the other of them despair, we take up with a sort of half-way middle ground, plainly untenable when critically examined, and we say to ourselves, Things are not so good as to warrant us in beinge specially cheerful, nor are they so utterly bad as to countenance us in turning our back on life. We have no call to joy, that is plain; but neither have we any call to suicide, and so

we will let life wear along, and make up our minds to live it out to the end.

This is a wide-spread philosophy of life, and one which for the time being is perhaps gaining adherents. And yet it is only one step removed from that familiar school of thought whose motto runs, as in St. Paul's day it ran, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Either there is a God supremely good, One whom his children may love and trust to the very uttermost point without the slightest fear of the reality falling short of the heart's desire, or else there is no God, no love, no pity, no forgiveness, no redress. It is no wonder that sometimes in our bewilderment we try to find a middle ground, some average estimate, some platform of compromise. There is so much in life as we see it pictured in our daily reading of what is going on in the world and our own personal contact with certain hard, ugly facts, there is so much in all this to blur our vision of the goodness of God, that we hesitate about accepting the wholly cheerful view, while yet we recoil with horror, unutterable horror, from the wholly tragic one.

And yet there can be really no middle ground in this matter. God is wholly good, if good at all, and those who hope in Him will be wiser if they hope with all their hearts than if they hope with only half their hearts. It is the old story; two masters we

cannot have. Elijah, clear-sighted prophet that he was, saw through the fallacy even in the dim light of those times while yet the dayspring of our better morning was wanting. The fickle people stood before him, questioning in their minds whether some mixture of Jehovah's religion and of Baal's religion might not be both feasible and profitable. There seemed to them just at that moment a good deal to be said on both sides of the question. How like a sharp sword must the edge of his rebuke have cut into the very fibre of their souls as he cried, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow Him.

On you and me to-day this same stern alternative is forced. We may try to escape it by half shutting the eyes, but things are what they are, whether we look at them or refuse to look at them. As a matter of fact, the plain choice is offered us between casting in our lot with that hope of which the fruit is joy, and that despair of which the end is death. But hope maketh not ashamed. Choose it, O doubtful heart, choose it, and be glad.

SERMON XX.

ROOTED IN CHARITY.

"*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height.*"—EPHESIANS iii. 17, 18.

THE figure is a mixed one. The being rooted in charity suggests the tree, the being grounded in charity the building. What have the two similes in common? Simply this, the idea of fixity or permanence in connection with the starting point of growth. The tree springs from its root, and the house from its foundation. Unlike in very many respects, tree and house resemble each other in this,—each is fastened to a definite spot on the earth's surface, of each it can always be said that we know where to find it. St. Paul believes that character ought to have this same attribute of fixity, stability. He would like to be able to say of the disciple as well as of the oak or of the tower, I know where to find him. Nothing would have been more repugnant to his feelings than to hear the Christian likened

to any thing that could be tossed about or blown away. Character, to be worth the name, must be something against which winds beat and tempests rage in vain. No doubt of tree and of building it may be said that each has its own distinctive way of meeting the onset. The wall quivers but does not bend, the tree bends but does not quiver, and yet they are alike in this, both of them hold their place. When the storm has spent its force, there they are, the one rooted, the other grounded, as before. The party of the defence has proved itself stouter than the party of the attack. Foundation and root have conquered.

But we must go down further still. Important as are the root and the foundation, there is a certain something without which they both of them are useless. This essential something is the soil. Unless the root has struck itself into the earth, the tree is as powerless to resist movement as if it were without root altogether. Unless into the earth the foundation has been sunk, we scarcely think of it as a foundation.

The text tells us that charity, or holy love, is the element in which Christian character must fix itself if we look to see it last. So to be rooted and grounded is the secret of stability. But it must be remembered that the "charity" of the New Testament is a wonderfully far-reaching word. To tie it down to almsgiving is the greatest possible mistake. Horizontally

it stretches out in all directions as far as man's fellow-man is found; vertically it strikes upward to the very heaven of heavens, and stays not till it has touched the throne itself. Such is the love or charity of which St. Paul says marvellous things. The essence of it is unselfishness, and this, whether the love be manifested in the direction of God or in the direction of man. The phrase unselfishness towards God may have a strange sound, but it stands for a real thing. Unselfishness towards God empties us of pride, makes us humble, submissive, willing to confess to Him, to worship Him, to give Him thanks; unselfishness towards man makes us helpful, eager to be of service, ready to share burdens, and of whatever has been freely given us freely to give. Such, hinted at in few words, is charity or holy love. If we would have it faithfully and fully pictured to us, so far as language possibly can picture it, we must go to that unmatched and matchless portraiture given in the first of the Corinthian letters, where with an eloquence in which the tongues of men and the tongues of angels seem to blend their powers, this same Paul tells us what the greatest and the most abiding of the Christian graces is.

But the text comes to us freighted with a definite purpose. This prophet and teacher has a well understood end in view in seeking to have us rooted and

grounded in love. This purpose, this end he states explicitly, and in very striking terms. He wishes this wish, prays this prayer, he says, in order that being thus rooted and grounded we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height.

A loving disposition, the necessary condition of gaining insight into spiritual truth,—that is our subject, and to those who care for truth, and live to find it, no field of thought could possibly be more attractive than the one thus opened to us.

Commentators have puzzled themselves over this "breadth and length and depth and height," as if the saying were purposeless and unfruitful unless we could name the definite thing the apostle had in mind as being broad and long and deep and high. Certain interpreters of early days fancied that they found in the words a mystical allusion to the cross, the actual instrument of punishment on which the Saviour was put to death. A strange conceit, but scarcely more strange than some which other students of the passage have entertained. All such enigmatical interpretation is beside the mark. We need not concern ourselves to discover some one single object to which the words apply. What St. Paul has in mind is the perfect symmetry of the truth of God, its absolute freedom from false proportion, and what he means is that the

mind which is rooted in love, which has the soil of charity from which to draw the juices of its life, will be a mind well-balanced, rightly-adjusted, sound and sane. Length, breadth and thickness are reckoned the dimensions of space. Taken together they indicate completeness. To apprehend a matter in its length and breadth and depth and height is to apprehend it thoroughly.

This point is brought out in a negative way in common conversation. We speak of a man of short-sighted views, which is another way of saying that he does not see far enough into the meaning of things, what he misses is the length of the truth. We speak of another as a man of narrow vision, indicating by the phrase our belief that the one we criticise is blind to the relations which the various parts of truth bear to one another. He looks at things as through a long, straight avenue hedged on either side with trees, and forgets all about the broad meadows and grassy plains which perhaps stretch out for miles and miles on either hand. This one does injustice to the breadth of truth.

We speak of a third as shallow in his thinking. He has an eye, we say, only for what is on the surface. Gilding and plating, bark and rind deceive him. He fancies that things are through and through what they appear to be on the outside. He is so dazed by

the glitter of the reflected sunlight on the surface of the stream that he cannot see the sand and pebbles only a few inches below, and therefore recognizes no difference between the shallows and pools. Thus the man fails to apprehend the depth of God's truth. We classify him at once as superficial.

And yet again there is the dwarfing truth to a low stature, the mistaking the foot-hills for the mountain, the failure to appreciate grandeur and loftiness, the bondage to what is petty and small and insufficient, a base contentment with a meagre estimate of a magnificent reality. The man who fails in this direction fails by missing the height of truth.

In all these ways we manifest and illustrate our deficiency as mortal men. What could be more to the purpose, then, in the way of stimulus and encouragement than the being told, as we are told in this text of ours, how we may learn to apprehend not the height alone or depth alone, but "the breadth and length and depth and height?"

Two conditions are named as essential to our doing this, the first of these is the one which has already been considered, namely, our being rooted and grounded in love, and the second is this, that we should be content to let others help us in the discovery of the truth of God, and not imagine that each one

of us is, alone and unaided, equal to the task of learning all there is to know.

This second condition is not so directly or plainly set forth as the first, but if we look at St. Paul's words attentively we shall see that it is there. For notice that what he prays for is not that being rooted and grounded in love, they may be able to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, but that they may be able to do this "with all saints." A most significant limitation that, if we will only look at it. By "all saints" the apostle means the whole Church of Christ, the flock, the army, the family in its entirety, and what he wishes to suggest is that the complete truth is too large to be grasped by the single mind or loved by the single heart. We must help each other in this thing, and what we cannot clearly see ourselves must trust our fellow believers to help us in seeing. That is the wiser punctuation of the Creed which puts only a comma between "the Holy Catholic Church" and "the Communion of Saints." The two ought to be synonymous in meaning, conterminous in area. The Holy Catholic Church is the Communion of Saints, the fellowship and company of those who are making the pursuit of holiness the foremost object in life.

St. Paul assumes that only those who are engaged in seeking after holiness can possibly be competent

authorities in the matter of spiritual truth, and he further assumes that even of these no single one is by himself a sufficient judge,—there must be the wisdom of the full bench, and if we are to comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, it must be with, and not apart from, "all saints" that we do it.

We easily see the absolute necessity of acknowledgment of incompleteness, insufficiency on the part of the individual in all secular concerns, why are we so slow to see it in the realm of things divine? That would be a singular university in which every teacher undertook to teach every thing. The very idea of an university presupposes the gathering together in one place for convenience of access a large number of teachers, each of whom is better acquainted than any other one with some particular branch of knowledge, and all of whom taken together hold in possession the sum total of human learning.

The Church is the university of souls; each member of it a teacher or a pupil as the exigency of the moment may demand, a teacher towards those who are weak where he is strong, a pupil towards those who are strong where he is weak. Thus the whole body of believers gets at truth in its completeness, and takes in the many-sidedness of it by encircling it. There is no kind of arrogance more stupid or more offensive than the arrogance which contemptuously

shuts its eyes on the excellencies of others, because they are the excellencies of others, and not its own. It is in rebuke of this disposition that the apostle is speaking when He says, look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others. Take the forms of art,—music, poetry, painting. The man who measures the real worth of these by his own inability to understand or appreciate them makes a melancholy mistake. Instead of assuming that because he can find nothing admirable or enjoyable in these things which he sees so many others admiring and enjoying, therefore they are worthless, he ought to infer that the fault, the deficiency is in himself. Here is a faculty, a capability, he ought to confess to himself, which it has pleased God to give to others and to withhold from me. I will try to be patient under the deprivation, but I will not be so foolish as to pretend that what I have not cannot be worth having merely because I have it not. Appreciation of one another's strong and good points, how much happier all life would be if there were more of it, if we could only oftener have the grace to see and to say,—I own my deficiency. I recognize and am thankful for your abundance. Enrich me out of your treasure, and if there be anything of mine which can help you, take it in return.

How it would sweeten and brighten family life (to

look no further) if there were to enter into it more of this spirit of mutual appreciation than we are wont to see there; if husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, instead of seeing only one another's deficiencies, were to notice, and now and then to speak of, the good traits, the strong points, the pronounced excellencies. This is the true way, depend upon it, to enlarge our own range and scope; nay, I will put it more strongly still, and say that thus and thus only can we keep heart and mind from actual shrinkage, for there is a sort of withering process that goes on in the soul incapable of outlook and indisposed to admiration. Turned in upon itself such a soul shrivels and hardens. Its power of growth is gone. Yes, this law of catholicity, this principle of the interdependence of souls, runs through all associated life, no matter what the form that life takes on. I have instanced the case of the family, but I might just as well have taken the city, the state, the nation, the church. Wherever men are thrown together in numbers, be the numbers large or small, there is need of the prompt recognition of this sacred principle, if you would have a wholesome social life.

Pride and vanity are the great obstacles to the free working of the principle. We cannot bear to humble ourselves to the point of acknowledging that there are respects in which others surpass us, points where

they have the advantage. We incline to take up with the most unnatural and forced supposition as a means of explaining the fact of our neighbor's superiority rather than the exceedingly simple one that he is superior. And all the while in doing this we rob ourselves; we shut the door against the possibility of improvement; we choose darkness when we might have light.

Now then we are in position to see and to appreciate the beautiful connection of thought that runs through our text; for the antidote, and there is no other, the antidote to the pride and vanity that hold us back from appreciating one another's excellencies and from being willing to be helped by them is this very charity or holy love in which the apostle prays that we may, to start with, be rooted and grounded. Given the charity that inclines our hearts to love our neighbor as ourselves, and there is sure to be found wrapped up with it the humility which is willing to confess deficiency and to receive replenishment. Rooted and grounded in love, we shall be willing, which is a necessary pre-requisite to being able, to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length and depth and height.

But suppose, what is perfectly supposable, that some one raises the question, Is it worth while? Is the end proposed one that justifies the sacrifice

necessary to the attainment of it. Pride is easier than humility, vanity more natural than lowliness, to assert superiority pleasanter than to confess deficiency. What is there about this promise of our being brought to know the breadth and length and depth and height, that can make it sufficiently attractive to us to compensate for such drawbacks as these. Substantially the question is the same that men ask one another at the foot of the mountain before making up their minds to begin to climb it. Will the prospect from the summit repay the toil of the ascent? The question goes unanswered unless there be some one in the party who can speak with the authority begotten of experience, who can say that he has been on the mountain-top and has actually seen the view.

To know the truth, to know it in its length and breadth, to know it in its depth and height, will that be worth the effort which clearly and beyond all doubt, the climb will cost us? There is one and only one entitled to speak; one, only one, who from having been on the height can tell, and He says that it is worth our while, and that, at whatever cost, we shall do well to make the knowledge of the truth of God the goal of all our effort here on earth.

I know how vague and visionary the whole thing looks to many eyes. I know how faint and unreal

the entreaty sounds in many ears. And yet am I asking too much, if I beg of you, before you set aside the search for truth as a thing not worth the trouble that it costs, the disappointments it involves, if I beg of you to compare with this motive for living which you are inclined to disregard, any one of the other motives with which you are disposed to take up. You do not think serious effort to know the truth of God worth your while,—but what aim in life are you proposing to substitute? Something doubtless you set before you as a mark—you are not wholly without aim—what is the mark? Whither looks the aim?

I will suppose that you are in the days of your youth. Here is your life before you, here is this vista of years that seems, as you look through it, to stretch out far away into the future. It may be only seeming; instead of years there may be but the fraction of one year, instead of days only the fraction of one day; this night thy soul may be required of thee. But waive that supposition; take it for granted that the days and months and years are to be yours,—how do you purpose filling them? to what are they to be devoted that looks to you better than that patient, resolute, seeking for the truth to which the Christ invites you? You tell me that you must have something more solid, more substantial to live for than this shadowy prize, the truth. Ah, my dear friend,

be cautious how you interpret solidity and substance. What you really desire is lasting satisfaction. Do you fancy that wealth, pleasure, fame, can give you that? No, these are among the things that pass away, Truth is eternal. There is nothing that outlasts eternity. Moreover, as to those things I just now named, you and I know perfectly well that sometimes they overmaster men and make slaves of them. Of the truth and of the truth only is it written that it shall make us free. So then, if we would have freedom, and lasting freedom, we must seek it through a knowledge of the truth; and if we would know the truth, we must seek it in the fellowship of those whose purposes are pure, whose aims are saintly; and if we would be ready for such fellowship as this, we must first of all be rooted and grounded in that charity which faileth never. Can anything be better worth our while than the endeavor after such a life as that would be?

SERMON XXI.

BETHLEHEM.

"*And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.*"—LUKE ii. 15.

THE lights and shadows of this second chapter of St. Luke make it one of the most beautiful of pictures. It opens with Cæsar Augustus, head of the world, as everybody imagines, and his taxing or census. Here is a contrast at the very outset. Cæsar exacting tribute of the world, God setting the world free. The same year witnesses both decrees, that which lays a fresh burden on the shoulders of a subjugated race, and that which turns again the captivity not of Sion only, but of all the world. Cæsar from his throne and Cæsar's Maker from his throne utter themselves to men. Both words fly very swiftly; the one along the Roman roads by messenger and courier, from town to town, till every furthest out-post

has been reached and informed; the other from the Heaven of heavens down to a little group of humble people, shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night. The heralds of the one monarch carry sad tidings of great grief, the heralds of the other glad tidings of great joy. Enslavement is the real burden of Cæsar's message, redemption, or the buying of men out of slavery, is what God's message means. And both, according to the intent of their authors, both messages are for "all people." Cæsar would reach all people in order that he may make them feel his rod the more effectually; God would reach them in order that He may make them the better know his love.

These two lines of conflicting purpose meet in the little town of Bethlehem, whither Joseph and Mary go up to be taxed, because it is David's town and they are of David's lineage, and whither, also, the angels send the shepherds that their own eyes may verify the tidings that the Prince of Peace is born. And here we have another picturesque effect. The busy innkeeper has no room for these poor people. They have come from a long distance, from Galilee, they tell him, they are travel-worn, and there is nothing about their appearance to indicate that they can pay him well. They may be of the family of David, as they allege, but it seems doubtful, at best,

and there are other guests brought here by this same business of the taxing who will much better reward his attention. Let these Galileans occupy the outbuildings, if they will, but really there is "no room for them in the inn." And thus He who has left for us men and for our salvation the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, finds his first earthly resting-place in a manger.

Then come those other contrasts out in the fields; the darkness of the Syrian night flooded with the sudden glory of the Lord; the angel talking with the startled shepherds: heaven's best and highest holding intercourse with earth's lowliest. How wonderful it all is! How beautiful! How infinitely more vivid than any touch of merely human art could make it, more rhythmical than any song! And yet, in what I conceive to be the true spirit of the text, I invite you to-day to come down to plain prose. The angels had left the shepherds when they started out to go to Bethlehem, the mystic light had faded from the hillside, they made their way to the village as best they could through the darkness, but there they found, yes, there they found the Christ and light again. Even so is it with us moderns. The angels have gone away from us into heaven. They do not visit our American hillsides. We neither see the bright-

ness of their presence nor catch the music of their song. They have left us. None the less is it our duty to say to one another at Christmas, as those simple-hearted shepherds did, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us." We shall find, I think, in doing so, that while the shepherds doubtless have the advantage of us in some things which they saw and we do not, we have the advantage of them in some things which we see and they did not. A miracle that addressed itself to the senses was their privilege, ours is the greater privilege of a miracle which addresses itself to the mind and heart. They saw the thing which had come to pass at Bethlehem in its beginnings; we see it in its late results, and surely our vision is a grander and a more satisfying one than theirs was.

For what are the things which have come to pass in the world as the results of that birth at Bethlehem? Consider some of them. And yet I hardly know where to begin, and it will be harder still, having begun, to know where to end, so much has the child of Mary done for men. Perhaps it is enough to say, as comprehending all the rest, that He has taught us to believe better things of God than ever were believed before. Men left to themselves and their own impulses are apt to think

ill of God. If they do not hate Him, they fear Him. How to propitiate the favor, how to escape His vengeance, these are the great ends of religion, as the savage looks at it. Civilization leads the more favored races to cast away much of this fear, but of itself gives them no law to put in place of it. Christ comes and brings with Him the announcement of the Fatherhood of God. He melts the hard hearts of men by revealing to them a love on God's part of which they had never dared to dream. The Father Himself loveth you, He says to his disciples, and the proof of this love is his willingness to sacrifice his Son. No other religion has anything to show like this. They all are religions of exaction; they seek, like Cæsar, to tax the world and draw a revenue from it. They lay burdens on men's consciences and heavier ones on their hearts. The Gospel alone gives instead of takes. It is the story of the one made poor that the many through his poverty might be rich. Yes, this is why it is worth our while to go with the shepherds to Bethlehem, we find there a gift.

But let me speak more directly of the thing that has been brought to pass. Out of the many points that might be spoken of, let me select one—Christian character. We speak of types of character, they are as marked and as distinctive as types of countenance, indeed the type of countenance is sometimes the index

to the type of character. But there are many varieties of type. There are national types of character. We speak of the English character, of the German character, of the Scotch character, and every one of there epithets conveys a special and particular idea to our minds. But over and above them all we speak of Christian character. The point I wish to emphasize is that this Christian character, as we name it, is a distinctive thing, with a definite origin. We trace it back to a certain point in the world's history, and there it disappears, or rather there it begins, and that certain point is the event we commemorate to-day. Christ brought into the world Christian character. It had not been here before. It was a new creation,—yes, part and parcel of the thing which came to pass when the shepherds said to one another on their hillside, Let us go and see what it is. High types of character there had been before Christ, no doubt. The Hebrew type of the upright man, just and devout, like Joseph, and Simeon and Nathanael, that was a high type. The stoic type, too, was a noble one in its way. Those who cast off the Gospel now find nothing better than that to take up with instead of it. The man of iron will, who stands up against the storms and shocks of chance as the headland stands against the sea, and says, "Do thy worst, I can bear it,"—there is much to admire in that. But the

Christian character differs from both of these. Humility enters into it, for one thing, as it never did or could enter into either the Hebrew or the stoic heart. The Christian is one who knows himself to be by nature weak and prone to go astray. He cannot say, with the Psalmist, "Preserve me, for I am holy," nor with the philosophic emperor, "I do my duty, other things trouble me not." The Christian would rather believe that there is One holier and stronger than himself, One to whom he looks up, One on whom he may lean, One who is his rock, his shelter, his refuge, his fortress and his shield. This is the working in him of that Spirit of Christ which rejoices not in loneliness and isolation and proud self-confidence, but is always glad to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." The same temper makes men humble towards one another, as well as towards God. The doctrine of the Gospel, that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven, reconciles us to inequalites which otherwise would gall our patience and destroy our peace. "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This is a strong way of putting it, but who ever put it so before Christ came? Now we recognize the diversity of gifts, the gradation of abilities, as a thing of God's ordering, and we are willing to have it so. We are content to learn this lesson of reverence, and to ac-

quire the habit of looking up to others, in place of that disposition to look down on them which more naturally belongs to us. Out of humility and reverence, which make the ground-work of Christian character, springs gentleness, that indefinable characteristic which has come to be synonymous with high breeding. It there were nothing else in history to illustrate the influence which has streamed from the Bethlehem manger, this alone would suffice, this exaltation of the title "gentle" from the rank of the lowliest and most despised of words up to the very throne of chiefest honor. Your stoic would have been insulted had you called him "gentle," but now the insult lies in the other direction, and to refuse to man or woman this epithet is to give the supreme offence.

To be "gentle unto all men," that is an apostle's exaction of one to whom he writes; and only think what that would mean! Imagine one always gentle to all, never fretful or fault-finding among equals, never imperious or arrogant or vindictive towards inferiors, never cringing or subservient in the presence of richer people, or abler ones, or wiser ones,—gentle unto all men. There would be indeed the evidence of high birth, yes, of that birth from on high of which Christ said to Nicodemus that until a man knew it he could not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

To humility and gentleness we must add the liberal heart. A stingy, miserly Christian, one who grudges what he gives to God, is no Christian; let us remember that. Spendthrifts we need not be, improvident we are especially warned we must not be, but large-hearted and generous, and pitiful and bountiful we must be at heart, or we are none of his. He came to give Himself to us. He was born of Mary to become one of us and then He gave Himself. While He was here He went about doing good, and in a thousand ways gave Himself to those among whom He lived; to the unfortunate He gave his time, to the sick and maimed, the blind and deaf, the palsied and demoniac, to all these He gave that virtue which went out of Him when great draughts were made upon his pity. He gave Himself upon the cross, a willing victim, dying, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God; and last of all, when after his resurrection He ascended into the heaven of heavens, He did it, so the Scripture tells us, that He might bestow gifts upon men. Can we be like Him, can we breathe his Spirit, and remain selfish, mean, sordid, ungenerous, churlish? No; these are not Christlike traits.

Again, patience is an ingredient of Christian character, the two-fold patience, which shows itself sometimes as willingness to suffer and sometimes

as willingness to wait. The patience with which some of the early Christians bore pain was a constant marvel to those who looked at them from the selfish stand-point of heathenism. Why should they suffer so uncomplainingly? their persecutors asked. What have they to gain by it? So they went on with their ineffectual tortures, and the Christians kept on with their uncomplaining fortitude, and in the end the patience carried the day. They were victors through endurance. So also their willingness to wait. There was no dogged insistence on their part upon their rights. They obeyed with literalness the saying, "Resist not evil." They were content quietly to build the Christian Church, little by little, stone by stone, knowing that in due time the heathen temple would topple over of its own weight. And patience in both of these senses, the enduring patience and the waiting patience, befits us still.

Once more, faith is an ingredient of the Christian character as such. Perhaps I ought to have named that first, as the framework of all the rest. St. Peter places it so, you remember, in that glowing catalogue of graces with which his second Epistle opens. Add to your faith, he says, virtue, and then he goes on with the rest as being all of them supplementary. But still I may not have been wrong, after all, in putting humility first, for it

is only the humble who will admit the approach of faith.

Pride asks for demonstration, the unchastened mind declares itself willing to believe if it can have all things made as plain as the day, as if seeing and believing were indeed what the proverb tries to make us think them, the same thing. But faith is that disposition in us which is willing to trust God even in the dimness of uncertainty, and in the face of all countervailing influences to say, I do believe, though it may not have been proven, that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

So then, these are the traits that make up Christian character,—humility, gentleness, large-hearted generosity, patience and faith. I do not say that these have not been illustrated singly and severally under other influences than those of the Gospel; I do not say that there has been no humility, no gentleness, no faith, no patience anywhere except in regions where Christ has been known and honored; to say that would be to be guilty of gross misrepresentation; what I say is that under Christian influences these graces have been blended in a way and according to a proportion in which they never were blended before, and that, as a result, we have the type of character called Christian, a new and different thing from

anything that had been seen on earth before the Bethlehem angels sang their song.

So then, in what the modern world demands of those who would secure its respect and confidence, I find a backward-looking evidence to the truth of the Bethlehem tradition. The acknowledged change for the better argues in favor of the belief which led to the change. The distinctively Christian virtues have won their high place in men's regard because it has been believed that they had their sanction in the example of One who came down from heaven to show us what God is like. It is neither pleasant nor seemly to have it said that the world has been helped forward to better and still better attainment in the way of right living by believing in a lie, hence we conclude that it was not a lie, but the truth, and, with full voices, give God thanks to-day for his unspeakable gift.

SERMON XXII.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT.

" . . *Come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*"—ISAIAH ii. 5.

THERE is a frankness about this invitation such as ought to make it for all honest minds singularly attractive. Nobody is really fond of darkness as such. Children fear the dark by a natural instinct, and grown-up people do not love it. We put up with the darkness that separates one day from another, because, without it, we cannot have the repose which our bodily senses demand, but all our associations of cheerfulness are with the light. It puts a check upon the joy of summer to notice that the days are growing shorter; and winter loses something of its chill when the lengthening afternoons begin to assure us that we have not a great while to wait for spring. "Come ye and let us walk in the light,"—is, so far, at least, and with nothing further added, a genial, winning invitation.

The language of religion is based upon these natural feelings of ours. God uses the outward tokens to teach us the inward truths. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." The seen world provides the letters, the characters, the hieroglyphics, or sacred writing, by dint of which our great Instructor helps us to read the mysteries of the world unseen; and the memories of our childhood put both pathos and meaning into the language of the prayer, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord."

There are a few words which seem to be to religion what the notes of the scale are to music. "Law," "life," "love," "light" are words of this sort. The harmonies of the Bible, and its melodies, result from varying combinations of these simple monosyllables with the name of God and with the name of man. It is interesting to be told, as we are told by those who have made the history of religious thought their study, that different races of men manifest varying degrees of susceptibility as respects these several keynotes of Scripture. It is said, for example, that Eastern Christendom has always inclined to make much of the idea of light in its religious teachings, while Western Christendom has similarly emphasized the thought of law. Even those who have never

made a profound study of the subject may see for themselves that there must be a ground for this contrast. Of late years many hymns of the Oriental Church have come, through the medium of translations, into general use among ourselves, and no one who is familiar with them can have failed to notice how prominent among the requests to which they give voice is the prayer for light. Now just as there are differences among Churches with respect to the religious ideas which they love to accentuate and dwell upon, so there are corresponding differences among individuals in the same Church. Some men see the truth more vividly from this point of view, others from that. The Christian year, with its ordered sequence of commemorative days and seasons, both illustrates this thought and also enforces it practically. Christmas and Good Friday are days of love; they are days with which, notwithstanding the fact that one of them is a festival and the other a fast, we associate identically the same central thought, namely, that of the infinite love of the heavenly Father, who, alike at the manger and on the cross, gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world. Lent, with its barriers of restrictions and its summons to method and system in religion, is suggestive rather of law than of love. Easter, Ascension and Whitsunday again are eloquent of life, the life which Christ came

that He might give the more abundantly, the life eternal,—while with Epiphany, the season through which we happen to be passing just at present, the controlling influence is light. Christ as the Light of the World is the figure now put before us for contemplation. To Him, as to the manifested God, the image of the Father, the Dayspring from on high, the Master-light, to pass from the language of ancient prophets to that of a modern and a Christian poet, "the Master light of all our seeing," it is to Him we turn.

But what are we to understand by "the light of the Lord?" Such light, I answer, as by the very clearness of its shining gives evidence of its having come direct from the central source of light, of its being, in fact, the Lord's light. There is no such thing as counterfeiting sunshine. There have been and are many imitations of it, but we know them when we see them; we never are really deceived; they are good in their way and in their measure, but the best of them is adjudged to be a ghastly pretence when it presumes to set itself up as a rival of the daylight.

How this clear light of the Lord is attainable for those who for any reason feel themselves shut out from it is a point to which we will turn presently, but for the moment dwell with me upon a distinction of some importance. Speaking broadly, we may say that men

feel the need of more light than they seem to have, in two ways; they need it for the illumination of the mind, and again they need it for the guidance of the conscience. The one want expresses itself in the words, "I do not know what to think," the other in the words, "I cannot tell how to act." Do not understand me as meaning to assert that these two needs of the man stand wholly disconnected. It is a mistake, and a flagrant one, to suppose that the two fields, that of thought and that of action, can be sharply sundered. A thousand subtile ties link the intellect to the conscience, and the Council of the Vatican was perfectly logical when, after declaring the Roman Pontiff infallible as a teacher of doctrine, it went on to affirm his consequent infallibility in the field of morals. Still, in a general way, and for purposes of convenience in discussion, we may distinguish between the need of the mind and the need of the conscience as respects this matter of walking in the light.

Take doctrinal perplexity, the inability to see clearly what ought to be believed. It is a very wide-spread source of uneasiness. Moreover, mental distress with respect to the articles of the faith, the better deserves our sympathy because we often find it allied with much gentleness of spirit and with the sensitive temperament. I am not now speaking of the arrogant and boastful forms of denial which are

never happy unless asserting themselves in places where their presence is unwelcome, the ruffians and highwaymen that dog the pilgrimage of believing souls. I am not speaking of them, but I have reference to those who honestly desire to receive the faith in its wholeness and its purity, but who are conscientiously hindered from doing so by mental difficulties which they cannot overcome, ghosts of old doubts and misgivings which they find themselves powerless to lay.

These are they who are looking for light, they long for nothing so much as for that. They are as those who watch for the morning. The Gospel to such persons may be put into three words, "Morning is come." The morning is come, not the full daylight; we do not claim so much as that; but the beginning of the daylight. Christ is the dayspring, that beautiful old English name for the dawn,—how little we appreciate it!—Christ is the dayspring, the beginning of the morning, and when once He is risen on the heart's horizon much that was dim before grows clear.

What I mean to say, (for I realize how easy it is for one to be misunderstood in using this figurative language) in plain prose is that the best way to work ourselves clear of doctrinal perplexities is to move towards Christ Himself, and to get

as near to Him as we possibly can. Instead of thinking first of religion as a set of doctrines to be believed, think first of Christ as a person to be loved and trusted. Love Him for his own sake, and because He is manifestly lovable; trust Him for his own sake, and because He is manifestly trustworthy. Give Him your confidence, just as you would give anybody your confidence who had shown himself deserving of it; and presently you will find that you have ceased, without quite knowing how or why, to be very much troubled about the doctrines. In one of the most famous of the many pictures of the Nativity, the space about the manger is lighted up, not by any ray of moon or star, but by the glory streaming from the Child Himself. The parable is a happy one, and encourages us to believe that the painter himself was something more than merely a Christian in name. He had caught the grand idea of a self-evidencing Christ, and instead of importing light into his canvas he resolved to make light pour out from it.

If you ask me, "Why turn to Christ rather than to other springs of light, for there are many?" I reply, Try another, if anywhere you can find one that seems to promise better things. Try another, if you choose, and see what comes of it. My point is that help we must have from some one. We need a guide.

Instinctively we reach out our hands for aid. The question is, In which quarter is the outlook most encouraging? Men imprisoned in the gallery of a mine, after the first shock of the explosion is over, bethink themselves how they shall set to work to find their way out, in which direction move. They listen; by and by, through the thick mass of earth and stone that walls them around, they catch the muffled notes of a human voice shouting to them. That is a clew, an encouragement; they work towards that. Presently, as a reward of effort on both sides, a struggling ray of light from the lantern of the relieving party works its way through among the crevices and becomes a token for good. What madness now for any one of the prisoners to advocate giving up this line of effort and trying another! The little ray of light is an all-sufficient answer to his arguments. Let him show anything in any other direction so promising as that. And, even so, we Christians challenge an answer to our question, "To whom shall we go?" before we will consent to quit Him whom the consenting voice of so many generations has called Saviour. But we have also something better than a challenge to give to those who differ with us, we have an invitation, an entreaty, and it runs thus, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." There is no compulsion here, except such as is always

exercised by that which is innately beautiful; there is no compulsion it is simply the persuasive "Come, ye."

I have spoken of the value of a little, a very little light, as giving an impulse to effort in the direction of more light. Are you weak in faith? Cherish what faith you have with all diligence. The flame flickers; —very well, be careful that it does not go wholly out. The man with the one talent was blamed not for his having had only one talent, that was no fault of his, but he was blamed for not having made more of what he had. Husband your resources. Hesitate before you throw away the mustard-seed of faith; within its tiny walls are shut up the possibilities of more than you suspect.

You say that there are not more than two or three sentences of the Creed that you can say honestly out of a full heart. That is something to be sorry for, you would be the better and the richer if you could grasp every sentence and call it your own, but by no means loose your hold on what you do believe. To hold a single article of the faith so firmly that the whole life is penetrated, and shaped and illumined by it, is better than to believe all the articles, and to believe them languidly. That is the secret of the vitality we often observe in some religious sect that has based itself on only one single fragment of truth.

We wonder that so one-sided a growth should flourish. But the reason is that what the sect does hold, it holds enthusiastically.

Again, I say,—Try to plant yourself as near as possible to the centre and fount of light. Try to have all the lines of your religious thinking move out from the Mount where Christ sits teaching his disciples, and when, on any one of these divergent roads, you find yourself perplexed, and at a loss, instead of trying cross-paths, go straight back to Him, and start afresh. Just as, in daily life, when disappointed and cast down, we turn to a trusty friend, saying, "I can depend on you. I can believe in you, whoever else fails me," so the mind, a thousand times misled and cheated in its discussions about truth, turns with infinite relief to Him who says with quiet confidence, "I am the Truth."

But it is time to say something of that other region of our life where light is needed,—the field traversed by the conscience and the will. How to live and act is a question quite as pressing as how to think and believe. Our life is full of choices, decisions, resolves. We live through no day without passing judgments innumerable, some expressed and some unexpressed, but all of them contributing a tinge of color, be it ever so slight, to the general complexion of our life. What then does walking in the light of

the Lord mean when looked at from this point of sight, from what most people call the practical side of our existence? If it mean nothing more, it must at least mean this much,—a high standard of character. Artists say that they cannot model well unless they model from the life. A copy of a copy is always a poor thing. We see it in poetry too. You can distinguish, in a moment, the genuine poet of Nature, the man who sings about the wild flowers and the forest trees and the meadow brooks because he has been among them and knows them and loves them, from the one who has borrowed or stolen all his ideas about those things from other poets. And so, in the endeavor after the right and true life, what we need is the opportunity to copy at first-hand and not at second-hand. There is wide room for choice in discriminating between different types of character. We want to know which is the best, we want to find the standard measure of the true stature of a man. We walk in the light of the Lord when we accept the Bible standard of character as the true one for child, for man, for woman, and when we determine that we will cling to that. You know what that standard is. You know how it covers and includes all that you most revere in others. You know that it gathers up into itself, gentleness, reverence, purity, fortitude, patience, loving kindness, and whatever else deserves the name

"unselfish." You know all these traits in others, you confess; you own, moreover, frankly, that these are the constituents of the Christian type of character. What remains then for you but to acknowledge, to say openly that these are the attainments at which you aim, however lamentably you may be falling short of them? Even those who get no further than to avow faith in these virtues themselves are to be congratulated, in comparison with those who have no standard at all. To make the cardinal virtues the guide of life is like steering by the stars. There is a better way, and yet to be steering by the stars is infinitely preferable to being all adrift. Hold fast through thick and thin your love of goodness, even though you do not rise to the worship of the good One. It is in some sense and to a certain degree walking in the light of the Lord, if you do no more than that. To cling resolutely to a high ideal of character, even though every moment we are self-condemned by the very fact that we do see so clearly what we ought to be and are not, is immeasurably better than to fall into that slough where it becomes easy to call evil good and good evil.

But why not rise to the highest and completest conception of what it means, in the practical activities of daily life, to walk in the light of the Lord? Certainly that loftiest view ought to include the idea of

a guiding spirit always and everywhere present to the trustful child of God, leading Him not only into truth, but also into righteousness. What is it that lends such a singular charm to those words which almost sing themselves into an anthem, without help from the musician, "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me,"—what is it, I say, that makes the words look so fair and sound so sweetly to us, unless it be that they touch or suggest a need native to all our hearts, the need of guidance? To walk in the light of the Lord is to walk as those do who are sure of their ground, and sure of it because they have a leader and are not all alone.

Good Christians distress themselves often and needlessly on account of their unanswered prayers. Having asked the heavenly Father again and again for some particular blessing, and not having received it, they have grown hopeless in prayer and account it idle to try again. Sometimes the result of such an experience is a virtual abandonment of the habit of prayer altogether, a practical siding with those who in the old days took up with the cry, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?" Others again, not quite willing to surrender a usage hallowed by the memories of childhood, fall back up-

on the ground that, although prayer be useless as a means of influencing the will of the Almighty, it may still be valuable in the training of the spirit, in developing the powers of the soul, just as beating the air may make the arm stronger, even though no outward result be accomplished. And so they gradually let the element of petition fall wholly out of their prayers, and care not to get beyond the single sentence of acquiescence, "Thy will be done." And yet there is a loftier view of prayer than either that which emphasizes request to the forgetfulness of the other phases of devotional feeling, or that which disallows request altogether. The words of our text open to us this better way of looking at the subject. "Come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.' Let us, that is to say, seek to come into such fellowship with the Father of our spirits, that nothing will be more natural than to speak out to Him whatever wishes and desires there may be hidden in our hearts, and nothing more easy than to be resigned, if, in His better wisdom, He sees fit to withhold the particular blessings we may have asked Him to bestow. Only by some such way of living, as it were, in the confidence of God, walking contentedly in the light of his continual presence, can it be meant, I think, that we should carry out the Apostle's apparently impossible command to "pray without ceasing," for by thus

living and thus walking we should in very truth never cease to pray.

I have spoken of our need of an enlightener, both for the illumination of our darkened minds, and for the clearing of our clouded way. I have spoken also of Jesus Christ, the true light, and I have tried to show in what manner He stands ready to meet this universally acknowledged need. Have my words found lodgment anywhere? In so far as they have truly reported the mind of God, and this is the preacher's function, nothing less than this, in so far as they have been true words, answering to realities and not to fancies, I cannot doubt that good will come of them. For truth, God's truth, has a penetrative power of its own, and where it enters "darkness cannot be."

SERMON XXIII.

ELIJAH ON CARMEL.

"*So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel.*"—I KINGS xviii. 42.

THIS was just after Elijah's signal victory over the prophets of Baal on the slope of Mount Carmel. Ahab, the bad king is, for the moment at least, a convert to the truth. The discomfiture of the false religion, as represented by his own and Jezebel's priests, has been so utter and complete that he is stunned into an unwonted docility, and obeys without a question Elijah's command to go and join in the sacrificial feast with which the priests of Jehovah are about to celebrate their triumph. But for Elijah himself there is no call to feast. On him the burden of a far weightier duty rests. His share in this reformation work is as yet only half fulfilled. He has ventured upon a word of prophecy. He has promised in Jehovah's name that the sore famine with which the land has been punished for its ruler's sins

shall be removed, and that the heavens shall rain down a blessing. He cannot rest, far less feast, until he know for certain whether the Lord has heard his petition and means to make good his word. So while Ahab, nothing loth, goes up to eat and to drink, Elijah, in his far different mood, goes up to the top of Carmel to pray.

I find here a striking illustration of the difference between the way in which a weak character is likely to bear itself under the pressure of a great emergency and the way in which a strong one similarly placed behaves. It will repay us if we give to the study of this contrast something more than a passing thought. Look first, then, at the two men themselves. Ahab was that king of whom it is said that "he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." The son of a military adventurer who had himself in his own day been unexpectedly raised to royalty by the overthrow of a usurper, Ahab seems to have inherited a strong love of arbitrary power, tempered by none of that graciousness which monarchs who have no reason to doubt the stability of their thrones find it easy to show.

He was a weak man by nature, and labored to hide his weakness by an ostentation of violence which he hoped people would mistake for strength. He did

not wholly lack refinement. Art had attractions for him, and one of the basest deeds that blackened his reign, the lawless seizure of an honest man's patrimony, was directly traceable to his taste for fine effects. He wanted Naboth's vineyard, because that particular piece of land was needed to complete the symmetrical arrangement of the pleasure grounds of his new palace; and so he compassed, or rather his wife compassed for him, the judicial murder of the man who stood in the way; an admirable illustration of the truth that a culture which does not rest upon true religion for its basis cannot be trusted to save people from the dominion of base instincts, from lust and cruelty and violence.

But the most palpable evidence of Ahab's weakness is to be found in his subserviency to the stronger will of the far more wicked queen. Ahab thought that he ruled Israel, but Jezebel knew that she ruled Ahab, and the people at large knew well enough that she was the tyrant and he the tool. Ahab, as we have seen, bowed before the majesty of Elijah on that terrible day at Carmel. He did not even dare to interpose a word of remonstrance against the slaughter of his own priesthood at the brook Kishon, and he cheerfully went up to eat and to drink at the table of the Lord who had proved himself to be the God. Not so Jezebel. No sooner had she heard of the righteous

vengeance visited on the four hundred prophets of the groves, her pensioners, and the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, than she sent a messenger to Elijah with these words, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time."

The threat never found a fulfilment, but the failure was not owing to any change of mind on the part of the dauntless woman who made it. Flushed as he was with his triumph, Elijah well knew what such a message portended, and he arose and went for his life to the very remotest town within the limits of the Holy Land,—Beersheba of Judah.

Ahab's perversion of the national faith, which Elijah's boldness checked but did not cure, was really Jezebel's work. It was she who brought in the debasing worship of Baal from her own native Phenicia, and made it supplant the appointed ritual of the true faith. She was a king's daughter, and she would not brook the notion that there was any God better than her father's god. "Let those wretched Israelites set aside their narrow prejudices about an only God. Let them unlearn their cant about holiness. There are gods many and lords many, and I will show them that mine is as good as theirs." This was the process of her reasoning, and so thoroughly did the pliable king, her husband, carry out her line of

policy, that, even in the hour of his triumph, Elijah was ready to cry, out of the bitterness of his soul, "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only am left." Elijah was mistaken in his estimate of the completeness of the national ruin, for there were yet seven thousand left who had not bowed the knee to Baal; but the anguish of his exclamation proves how successful the infamous queen had been in her plan for revolutionizing the national religion.

This, then, was Ahab,—a weak man, with luxurious tastes, easily attracted by the glittering outsides of things, whether palaces or religions, ready at any time to go up to eat and to drink, at heathen tables when heathenism prospered, with Jehovah's priests when they happened to be uppermost, but always a despicable object at either feast because men knew that the robe of his kingship covered the heart of a slave. How could he seem to them Israel's master, when clearly he was not and never had been "lord of himself."

Now look at Elijah. In the whole succession of the prophets and kings who pass across the page of Old Testament history you shall not find a figure better worth looking at than he. At his very first appearance in the narrative he starts out upon us ab-

ruptly, unannounced, like a lion from his lair. The other prophets are formally introduced to us, as it were. Something, even though it be only a little, is told us about their parentage or education. Not a word of this sort about Elijah. He leaps into the scene unheralded, simply Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead,—that is all. We do not even know for certain the meaning of his title "Tishbite"; there may have been a town named Thisbe; but the statement that there was, is a pure supposition, no ruins of any such town exist, nor any well-authenticated traditions fixing the site. As he appeared, time and again, to Ahab, so he appears to us meeting him in the roadways and in the wildernesses of history, suddenly. He darts out upon us as we journey, his own messenger. And what a magnificent character it is which he presents us for study. It seems to lift itself above the general level, like the height of his own Carmel, jutting out into the Mediterranean and looking calmly down upon the crawlings of "the wrinkled sea"; for to a nature like his the petty passions and strifes of men are but ripples, though they seem billows to those who are among them. The one thought that filled Elijah's mind to the full was the idea of the righteousness of God. Like his New Testament counterpart, John the Baptist, he had dwelt much in solitude. Alone in the

desert places of northern Palestine, as John in the wilderness of the south, he pondered the awful problem of our life. He thought of all God had meant his people and his land to be. He recalled the glorious traditions of a purer past. He went over in his mind the wonders Jehovah had wrought in Egypt, in the land of Zoan, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness; his memory travelled back to the golden days when Judah and Israel were one kingdom, when David sang his sweet songs and Solomon uttered his wise sayings. He kept company in spirit with the heroes and deliverers of those old days, with Moses and Joshua and Gideon, the men who had judged with equity and ruled in the majesty of righteousness, and then he looked at life as he saw it there at Ahab's court; he watched the bad priests insolently breaking down the altars of Jehovah, and the false prophets greedily eating of Jezebel's bread, and his spirit was stirred within him thus to see his people wholly given to idolatry. His heart was hot; while he was musing the fire burned; then spake he with his tongue, and when he spake men listened. That was a voice whose vibrations could shake a throne. Ahab, when he heard it, trembled with fear; Jezebel, when she heard it, trembled with rage. There was nothing tender or gentle or winning about Elijah. Sternness was of the very essence of his nature, the fibre of his

soul. His words were for the most part words of indignation and reproof; his miracles for the most part miracles of divine vengeance. He called down fire from heaven, but it was to consume and to destroy, not to enlighten or warm. In these respects he was a marked contrast to his pupil and successor, Elisha, whose career as a prophet was distinguished for beneficence and loving kindness.

But there are times that call for sternness; periods when the capacity for vehement indignation against wickedness is in place and valuable. Elijah was called to be God's prophet in an hour of that sort. Misrule like Ahab's, iniquity like Jezebel's, called for rebuke, for stern, unrelenting chastisement, and Elijah was the man of all men, the prophet of all prophets, to inflict it.

Beyond the reach of flattery himself, not open to any of the temptations which so easily transform courtiers into villains, his spirit was wholly free to wander hither and thither, visiting the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience in words they could neither refuse to hear nor fail to remember. "Art thou that my lord Elijah?" was the wondering inquiry of a chief officer of Ahab's, when he happened one day to meet him of a sudden in the path. It was a striking testimony to the innate majesty of this child of the desert. "My Lord" is a title that be-

longs in kings' houses, but this servant of a king felt that he had never anywhere met with one so kingly, so full-charged with the spirit of command, and his homage went forth to him at once, "Art thou that my lord Elijah?" "I am," was the prompt response. "Go tell thy lord. Behold Elijah!"

This is the man who, while Ahab goes up to eat and to drink, goes up himself with his one attendant, to the top of Carmel to pray. We have both of them before us now, the king at his feast, the prophet at his watch. The most obvious practical lesson to be drawn from the contrast is that which I said, when we began, I should ask you to draw from it—the value of a fixed purpose and of a character strengthened by the grace of God, in the great emergencies of life. Most persons finding themselves situated as Elijah was at the close of that great day's struggle would argue, "This is enough. I have carried my point. Baal is vanquished, the false prophets are dead Ahab is ready to obey me. Now I will rest. Here is the sacrificial feast prepared. I will simply give over exertion now and take my ease; surely I have earned it." But no, the moment of a man's seeming triumph is the moment of his greatest need. None so much require the present grace of God as those who for the instant seem to be at the top of the wave, for from the top of the

wave to the trough of the sea is but the passage of a moment, and the heart which to-day is singing its *Jubilate* may to-morrow be chanting *De profundis.*

Daniel, prime minister of an empire, praying in his chamber towards Jerusalem at morning, noon and night, and Elijah, flushed with victory, toiling up to the top of Carmel, that he may be alone there with his God, are pictures upon which the greatest, and the busiest, and the most famous of men may gaze to their supreme advantage. But not the great and the famous only, all of us may gather help, and learn wisdom from this same sight. Are we ever tempted, at times, to think that all is going so prosperously with us, our plans succeeding so admirably, our resources holding out so well, our health so firm, our spirits so good, our friends so influential, our prospects so favorable, that there is no particular call to us to be devout, no especial need of our turning to God? If we ever do find ourselves feeling in this way, let us remember Elijah and his behavior in the proudest hour of his whole grand career. No measure of success could possibly seem in his eyes so great that he could afford to slight the duties of watchfulness and prayer. Nothing is finished in this world; we never reach a point where we can sit down and say, "Now it is just as I would have it; now I will enjoy the fruit of my toil, will enter on the

harvest of my success." Our best achievements are only on the slope of Carmel; there is always a still, quiet height above us, to which we may climb and hold communion with our God—nay, to which we must climb if any permanent blessing is to be won and kept.

Count no success, either in the line of secular or of religious endeavor so complete that there is no need of seking further blessing from Almighty God. We never, by any chance, can possibly get beyond the need of prayer, never are we so securely established that we can spare God's help.

Thus far we have been dealing with the text in a purely historical way, but many of the pictures which history unveils to us are parables of spiritual truth, and we do them no violence when we treat them as such, and as such interpret them. To explain the Old Testament narratives as allegories and nothing more, amounts to explaining them away. To receive them as genuine history, and then to find in them illustrations of universal truths besides, is to do them double honor. It was thus apostles used the ancient Scriptures, and thus we may use them. If we are careful to do so according to the proportion of faith, in harmony, that is to say, with the general line of Bible teaching, we cannot go astray. Elijah rebuking Ahab is the Church rebuking the world. Elijah

going up to the top of Carmel, while Ahab is content to eat and to drink, is the Church seeking in retirement and solitude to hold communion with her King and Head. No conception of the nature and functions of the Christian Church is an adequate conception which leaves out of the account the Church's duty as a prophet, a witness for God. The Church is set in the world that she may bear testimony in God's name for righteousness and against iniquity. The Church's voice ought to be God's voice. So, then, when the Church is most popular with the world at large, she has most reason to fear that she is not discharging her trust faithfully. "The world cannot hate you," said a greater than Elijah to the time-servers of his day. "The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." This was the reason why Ahab and Jezebel hated the prophet who told them the truth. When the voice of the Church allows itself to be hushed in the presence of flagrant wickedness, when prophecy ceases because of timidity, and there is no plain speaking anywhere in the face of the workers of unrighteousness, then it does not much matter how firmly established religion may seem to be, how grand the buildings dedicated to worship, how costly and brilliant the whole equipment of what calls itself divine service. Baal has

won the temporary victory, Jehovah's presence has departed.

Is the Church of Christ, my friends, as we see it embodied among us, doing fearlessly the needed work of criticism and rebuke? How is the gift of prophecy, the charge to speak for God, most commonly exercised among us? Is it in the direction of prophesying smooth and pleasant things, or is it, as it ought to be, in the blunt utterance of honest truth, whether it be welcome or unwelcome, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is to little purpose that we declaim against the sins and iniquities of dead generations, if somehow we carefully forget to point at the shapes which those very same wickednesses are taking on to-day. "Pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness" made the iniquity of Sodom. Do not these same things make the iniquity of the luxurious classes in our own America? And shall there be no voice of prophecy lifted up against them? Shall the Church stand silent by while the very sins which roused the wrath of the impetuous Tishbite are thinning the blood and killing the vigor of a whole people? Then is the Church no true prophet, then has she forgotten her high calling to be the voice of the holy God, then is there double need why she should go up to the top of Carmel and refresh her fainting resolution with the food of prayer.

In many ways, it cannot be denied, the prospect looks dark for the Church of Christ. Torn by internal feuds, betrayed by the treachery of false brethren, assailed from without by the allied forces of unbelief, and scorn and hate, who can wonder if now and then the courage of the garrison falters, if here and there a despondent voice is heard counselling surrender. But courage! Let God be true and every man a liar. Christ's word is pledged to the perpetuity of his Church, and his promise stands that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Let the Church prophesy as she ought. Let her bear witness in the spirit and power of Elias, and the same triumph that rewarded him shall reward her. Ahab may fret, and Jezebel fume, but let God's prophet speak the truth and dare the consequences. This is the true safety of the Church. Not by compounding with the world for a good share of creature comforts, but by plainly telling the world what God says about the world's ways, and the end to which they lead, must the Church seek to subdue the world and to tame its wrath.

In order to recruit the strength demanded for this sort of duty, the Church needs, from time to time, the help that comes from quiet retirement. The prophet knew that from the top of Carmel he should best be able to study the face of the sky and read its signs,

and so, weary as he was, he made the toilsome ascent, and chose the still spot where he could watch and pray. The penitential season upon which we have just entered gives us an opportunity to do the same. What a mistaken sagacity is that which flatters itself that it is too well informed to honor Lent, too well conditioned spiritually to need Lent. It may be that individual Christians here and there are so strong in the faith, so earnest in devotion, so untiring in good works that a time of special religious effort is not even a help to them, far less a necessity; but surely, when we look at the question in a large way, and consider how many more there are among God's people who are weak in the faith, easily tempted and easily beguiled, than there are of sturdy make, we cannot help seeing that for the Church, taken as a whole, such an observance as this time-honored one of Lent is healthful and helpful and to the point.

We have seen how much there is to learn from a single incident in the life of a great man who was also a good man and a true. Far from exhausting the wealth of our subject, we have but turned the earthly crust of it, and picked up a flake of gold here and there. Dig deeper for your ownselves, my friends. Turn to the best account whatever hint may have struck you as suggestive, and you will find that "that

my lord Elijah," for whose return his own countrymen so long and so confidently looked, has actually come again for you, and is speaking to you afresh out of his own great heart and in his own frank way the truth of God.

SERMON XXIV.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR ME.

"*Thou Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.*"—GALATIANS ii. 20.

"WHO loved me,"—the whole power of the Christian religion is shut up in these three words. No,—I ought not to say "shut up in these three words,"—the whole power of the Christian religion flows out from these three words. To realize that God made the world fills one with wonder for his skill as architect and builder; to be told that God governs the world, that He lays down the law, that from his lips come the "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," this strikes sharply home to the conscience, but the entrancing, the heart-compelling thought is that God loves the world, that He feels for those whom He has made and whom He rules, that He has compassion and tenderness and pity, as well as strength and intellect and will. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, but it is for

man to say, "I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord; his mercy endureth forever."

The great end and aim of what we call the Gospel is to persuade us that God does love us, and to-day, Good Friday, we are invited to believe this, sitting at the foot of the cross. But there is more than this to be said. The text is not a general statement that in a large, comprehensive way the heavenly Father loves the human race. Deists, Theists and Mohammedans may grant you as much as that. No, the text is the affirmation, on the part of one single person, that Jesus Christ loved him. Who was this one single person? A great deal hinges upon that point. Who was it? Was it one of the twelve disciples, those daily companions of our Lord in his journeyings up and down the Holy Land? Was it one of "the multitude," so called, that large body of uncertain followers, who sometimes were about Christ in his ministry, and again were not? Was it any one of those who had cherished a secret interest in the words and works of Jesus, like Nicodemus; or of those who had given Him social recognition and the welcome of hospitality, while yet withholding actual discipleship, like Simon the Pharisee? Or, was it one who had owed Christ gratitude for some signal act of blessing, like Lazarus? Or especially was it He whom some identify, with Lazarus, the young man who had great pos-

sessions, and of whom it is distinctly said that when Jesus saw him He loved him? If it were any one of these we should be able to see at once a certain natural reasonableness, so to speak, in such a man's saying that Christ had loved him. Jesus did, as we know, love the disciple John with a peculiar tenderness. Was it John, then, who said this thing? Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary. Was it either Martha or Mary who said it? No, it was no one of any of these. Who then was it? It was a man who had never seen Jesus Christ at all in the body, and whose knowledge of Him had come long after the Ascension day which closed the visible ministry of the Son of Mary on the earth. It was St. Paul. Never, except in sudden rapture on the road to Damascus, has Paul seen Jesus, yet this is the way in which he speaks: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in one, and the life which I now life in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Clearly, on this man's lips, the words "who loved me" must have had another and a profounder meaning than that which they might have carried with them had they been spoken by any one who had known Jesus and been loved by Him while He was still living out

> "the sinless years
> That breathed beneath the Syrian blue."

Let it be our aim to find out, if we may, what that other and deeper meaning was.

First, try the words upon the supposition that Jesus Christ was simply a preacher of righteousness, like many who had gone before and many who since have followed Him, driven to martyrdom by the revengeful hatred of the men whose iniquities he had exposed. This is to-day a somewhat widely accepted interpretation of Christ's life and work. He was a pure and holy man of God, they tell us, and because He was pure and holy, and sought to make others so, his reward was naturally and inevitably the cross. He suffered because he was true to principle, and all who will be true to principle must, in some sense and in some measure, suffer too. Thus they lay the stress wholly on the compulsion of circumstances, and the malice of the persecutors: seeming to forget entirely that other side of the subject brought out by such sayings of our Lord as this, for instance, when He is speaking of his life: "No man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," and still more completely to ignore the thought emphasized by Simon Peter, in his famous sermon at Pentecost: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

But it does not enter into my purpose to follow out this controversial line of thought. It would lead us into paths, which there is no special call to visit on Good Friday. All I desire to have you do is to note in passing how utterly any such supposition as the one I have mentioned, empties the words of the text of meaning. If Christ was a martyred prophet, and no more, how could it possibly be said of Him that He had loved Paul, a man unknown to Him by face; nay, so loved him as to be willing to give up his very life for his sake,—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me;" those are the words. Select any other famous sufferer for the truth's sake you will and put him in Christ's place. Take Stephen, first and greatest of the Christian martyrs, and imagine St. Paul saying of him,—"who loved me and gave himself for me." The reasoning is all the stronger because in this particular instance there was a personal relation between the two men named. Stephen had prayed for his murderers, of whom Paul was one, and we may therefore conjure up a far-fetched sense in which it might be said by Paul of Stephen, "He loved me and gave himself for me"; that is to say, he prayed for me as I stood by, and by his own willingness to forgive showed that he loved me. But, if even with the name of Stephen substituted for that of Christ, the saying becomes obscure, and wears an undeniable

look of artificiality, much more would it do so were we to insert that of any one of the long list of martyrs who died before St. Paul's day, from righteous Abel down to Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.

But let us try the words upon another supposition wholly different from that of merely human martyrdom. Let us try them upon the supposition that Jesus Christ was not simply *a* son of God, but was that Son of God "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven"—yes, One who knowingly, consciously, voluntarily and of set purpose and resolve, left the light and joy and gladness of that glory which He had with the Father, in order that He might enter into and share the dim and struggling life men are living here upon the earth. His own words certainly invite us to such a supposition. He does not speak of Himself as one who began life here, as others begin it, from the beginning. The consciousness of a memorable past seems to be always lying in the background of his mind. He is the one who alone of all is to be recognized as having come down from heaven. The line of lineage through Mary runs back along the earth's surface, as we may say, to the first man; but there is another line, a vertical line, a line that does not touch earth at all, or touches it but for

the moment in which it starts upon its journey to the land beyond the stars.

"I am from above," "for this cause came I into the world," "I know whence I came." The only way to wholly humanize sayings like these, to make out that He who said them was mortal like ourselves, and bent simply on illustrating powers and traits common to us all as men, is to assume pre-existence in some former life as having been the condition of the entire human race. So understood, Christ would be teaching from his own experience what is true of all of us. There are times when the mind is tempted to turn that way under pressure of the difficulties that beset it. To an eye that looks with habitual despondency at the world as a world lying in wickedness, it sometimes does seem as if the earth might be a sort of penal colony among the moving spheres of which the universe is full—a spot, ordinarily the abode of outcasts, but one to which, now and then, there comes, out of pity for our wretchedness and mean estate, some sweet, gentle, holy spirit, willing to take flesh and dwell among us, that we may be lifted up and blessed. We have known such, all of us. Short lives full of power and beauty while they lasted, they have seemed indeed as if they were but episodes in an experience begun elsewhere and long ago. Angel children, they light up earthly

homes for a little, and then take their flight. But this is Platonism, not Christianity; and I mention it as a dream not as a truth. The very fact that Christ draws so sharp a line of distinction as He habitually does between Himself and those to whom He speaks is evidence that we are not to receive what He says of his own origin as being in any sense a finger-post to point us to our own. He never addresses any one else, no, not even those nearest and most precious to Him, as having been with the Father before the world was. What is there in common between me and thee, He says to the "highly favored among women." He never gives the slightest hint to lead us to suppose that we were conscious spirits elsewhere before entering into the earth life. The whole drift of his discourse is in the other direction. We must be born again, He teaches, before we can so much as see that beatific state out of which He with plan and purpose and intention came.

Now we are in a position to try to apprehend, though we never may hope to reach, a point where we can wholly comprehend what is meant when Paul speaks of Jesus Christ the Saviour as one who loved him and gave Himself for him. The intense brilliancy of the thought is such that the eye is almost blinded in the very effort to look straight at it, for it is nothing less than this, that in the infinite heart of

Christ the personality of Paul had a distinct, determined place, and that the love was such that, had there had been no other child of man existing, Christ would have died for Paul. Waive for a moment the point whether such a thing is conceivable or not, waive that point and believe the statement to be true. Do you wonder at Paul's marvellous life? Are his willingness to suffer and his willingness to toil any longer a matter of surprise? Do the watchings and the journeyings, the stripes and imprisonments, the perils by robbers and the perils by the heathen, the thorn in the flesh, the shipwreck, nay, the final martyrdom, do any of these things seem in the least degree mysterious or strange? Ought he not to have been willing to bear all this, yes, and ten thousand times more than this, if he believed that saying to be true which we, for the moment, have agreed to consider true? Now, as a matter of fact, Paul did believe that saying to be true. Hence the power his single life has had to sway the fortunes of the world. Supposing you or I could sing with a perfect heart, and out of an absolute conviction of its entire truth, that line of Anne Steele's hymn which is a paraphrase of our text, "The Saviour died for me," think you there would not be other and better results from our lives also than, as it is, are likely to come forth from them?

Two difficulties, supposed to be insurmountable, are alleged to stand in the way of our accepting such teaching as this. Both of the difficulties are difficulties of faith. One is the incredibility of Christ's having such a foreknowledge as would enable Him to single out one or another soul among the millions upon millions destined to come into existence; the other is the incapacity of any human heart to appreciate, and far more its incapacity to deserve, a love so great. Christ could not have first loved Paul as Paul supposed. Paul was not worthy of such love. These are the objections more briefly put. Let us look at them.

As to the difficulty of believing that He, the only-begotten of his Father before all worlds, could know in advance and love in advance every one of the myriad conscious souls which were to make up the complete number of the human race, this is to be said, that as a difficulty it is scarcely greater than that of believing in God's power and willingness to hold intercourse with the souls now living, among whom we count ourselves. And yet this last is a point of faith generally accepted. The whole theory of prayer rests upon it, yes, and belief in a judgment. He is Judge because Searcher of hearts. He must be a rash man who will undertake to lay down with accuracy the things that are impos-

sible with God. Equally rash is the attempt, without the aid of revelation, to lay down the things that are possible with God. And but for Christ's own words about knowing his sheep severally and individually, and but for such words as these of the text, we might well hesitate to suppose that such a marvellous interpretation of the saying "who loved me" could possibly be true. And yet there are analogies and resemblances in the natural world that ought to soften at least the hard surface of our incredulity. The discoveries of the last forty years in the realm of light, and sound, and motion have startled even the most sedate minds. Undreamed-of possibilities of communication between mind and mind have been translated into plain everyday fact, and things are going on all around us, in the common intercourse of life, which would have seemed to the men of a century ago nothing short of supernatural. Now may it not be that in the spiritual sphere, in that atmosphere where love and piety, penitence, and joy, and gratitude move, there are similar marvels which have not yet begun to be understood? May there not be possibilities, that is to say, in the realm of feeling and of pure thought answering to these delicate adjustments and far-reaching combinations of physical forces, which have lately been opened to our sight?

We say it is inconceivable that Christ in lov-

ing the whole family of men well enough to come here and die for them, could possibly have singled out Paul and loved him. Certainly it is beyond the power of our minds and hearts to understand how it could have been, but there is nothing to forbid faith's rejoicing in the belief that even so it was.

A microscopic photograph shows us upon a surface no larger than a pin's head the faces of all the most famous men that have ever lived. Now the number of the human race—all who have lived, all who are living, all who are to live till the end comes—is limited. It is a number the very thought of which baffles the imagination, but still it is a finite number.

Push back the beginning of human life upon the earth as far as the most exacting of the maintainers of the antiquity of man would have you do, and push forward the date of the expiration of our lease of this planet as far into the future as the astronomers will allow, and still the number of our race is limited. In all probability that number could be written out, if it were known to us, in the notation we ordinarily employ. We have figures large enough to express it. Shall we then lay it down as an impossibility that every separate personality among these millions upon millions can be imaged on the heart of Christ? Again I say he must needs be a rash man who would venture so to do.

But I pointed out that there were two objections to this doctrine of the text. The first is this one of the supposed inconceivability of the thing.

In addition to this, it is urged that even if the thought were for an instant admissible, it would still be too much to ask us to believe that any one soul among so many can be worth so costly a love. "Who loved me and gave Himself for me" are the words. Now, is it not the grossest vanity, so the objection runs, for one to suppose that his poor petty personality can be worth so much to the eternal Son of God? There may be natures so lofty, minds so magnificently endowed, hearts so rich in the ability to return love, and so capacious for receiving it, that for such elect and royal ones an incarnate Christ might even dare to die; but can we, without an audaciousness that amounts to spiritual effrontery, imagine such a thing in the case of our own poor, weak, starveling souls? Is it to be supposed for a moment that one of us, still more that every one of us, could, under any circumstances, dare to say, "The Saviour died for me?" And yet, dear friends, this, even this, marvellous and incredible as it may seem, is the doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ. This is the great thought for which Good Friday stands. This is the secret meaning of the cross.

And why, after all, why should we not believe,

and believe easily, that the soul has this inestimable value? We look up at the starry skies at night, and, if we are in a meditative mood, the thought of the power which holds the heavenly bodies in their places, and of the far-reaching intelligence that can call them all by their names, is almost sure to suggest itself for a moment, if no more. Moreover, it does not strike us as a thing at all strange (granting the fact of a Creator) that He should care for objects so magnificent as those great golden spheres. These, we say to ourselves, these rolling worlds are worthy in their grandeur of the supporting hand that guides them continually through space,—but man, what is man?

Ah, there is where we make our blunder, in asking that question so contemptuously. What is man? He is a creature of God more worthy of our wonder and better deserving of survival than all those lights, whether the lesser or the greater, that hang in the firmament of the heavens. Yes, it is deeply true that He who builded the house is greater than the house, and if it be, as Christians hold, that in the soul of man the image of Him who built the house, though blurred and darkened, still survives, then must it be that such soul also is greater than the house. Christian believers are sometimes charged with not appreciating the grandeur of the natural world, not taking sufficiently into account the illimitable times

and spaces of the universe, too much absorbed the while in their care for what they call spiritual interests. Oh no, it is not that,—Christian believers have no wish to dwarf or disparage the great creative triumphs of the right hand of the Most High; but what they are aiming at is to vindicate for the heavenly Father a higher honor than that of the mechanic and the designer. They are jealous for his great name of "Holy." What a fine scorn of any such unworthy and partial conception of the Almighty as that which sees in Him merely the artificer, runs through the writings of the Hebrew prophets, and how well the spirit of their proud utterances breathes in the Christian poet's boast,

> "The stars are but the shining dust
> Of my divine abode."

So then, let us not fear to take to ourselves the full comfort of the text, marvellous as it is, incredible as it seems to be. And let us take it to ourselves not collectively and in the mass, but severally and individually. This thought is the very thing we need, to give courage to the flagging will, comfort to the faint and failing heart. I am to think of Him who loved me, who loved me unto death. Yes, that is the core and essence of the Gospel. That is the inscription written on the cross for you and

me. That is the message of Good Friday. If this day were merely the commemoration of the darkest crime that stains the page of history, "Good" would be the very last epithet we should dream of coupling with it. But it is not the crime that we commemorate, or rather it is not that which we chiefly have in mind. We do indeed recall, and recall with shame, the wickedness that brought the Saviour to the cross, and we confess our own complicity with the wickedness in just so far as we have in us the temper and disposition which prevailed on that guilty day. But this is not the main thought. The main thought centres in the sacrifice; and that was not made by those who plied the scourge and platted the thorns and drove the nails, not by them in any sense, but by Him who said, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God," by Him who having power either to save His life or lose it, deliberately chose, out of love for us, to lose it, rather than to save it. And so we say *Good* Friday.

SERMON XXV.

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP?

"*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*

"*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.*"
—I CORINTHIANS xv. 35–36.

THIS text invites to an inquiry as difficult as it is fascinating; as fascinating as it is difficult. St. Paul would have us join him in a meditation upon the Christian doctrine of resurrection. He foresees that to touch the question at all means controversy. He knows perfectly well that he cannot advance a step without encountering criticism. The moment he opens his lips to teach, "some man" will say, How are the dead raised up?

Of course "some man" will say it. It is impossible to make such affirmations as that the dead shall rise, and not start in people's minds the inevitable How? and When? and Why? and Where? Our minds are so fashioned that these interrogatives insist upon making themselves heard. St.

Paul puts it mildly with his "some man." Had he said, "Every man who thinks must sooner or later confront these questions," he would not have been overstating his point. The matter is one of universal interest, for we must all die, and who is there who can afford to be indifferent to the question, What is coming next?

Disembodied the soul departs out of this world,—that is clear. Is it destined to be again embodied, and if yes, then with what body will it come? Do not be discouraged by the apparent rebuke with which St. Paul, at the very outset, meets his supposed questioner. He does not say to you and me, "Thou fool," in any such tone or sense as brings him under the condemnation Christ visits upon the careless users of that phrase. We need not be at all afraid that he has forgotten the Sermon on the Mount. He is simply expostulating with us, that is all; gently chiding our slowness of heart, and doing it, moreover, in the very same phrase Christ had Himself employed on Easter afternoon, on the way to Emmaus, while the two whose eyes were holden that they should not know Him walked with Him and were sad. There was affection in the very voice that called them "Fools." So here, it is pity rather than rebuke that lurks under the word. Foolish body, foolish creature, silly child, not to discern what even Nature

might suggest, let alone prophecy, if you would only consider attentively her ways. How is it with the seed thou sowest? Must not that also die if out of it is to come forth the rose, the violet or the stalk of wheat? In fact, so far from reproaching us with our wish to look intelligently into the subject, St. Paul seems bent on urging us to this very course, for he at once launches out upon a reasoning process which fills one of the longest chapters of the New Testament.

Upon a few of the more salient points of his exposition I desire to fix your thoughts to-day. If we cannot arrive at perfectly lucid conclusions, we may, by God's blessing, find that our minds have become, at least, measurably the clearer for making the attempt. There are subjects upon which absolutely white light cannot, from the nature of the case, be thrown, but with respect to which, nevertheless, one feels that twilight is better than no light. To be able to know only in part is a disappointment to the student; to be able to prophesy only in part is a mortification to the seer; but neither student nor seer will, if he be wise, let himself be piqued into throwing away what little he may happen to have.

I observe then, as a point of foremost importance, that the doctrine of resurrection illustrated in act by Jesus Christ, and taught in words by Paul, is an entirely different thing from the philosophical tenet of

the immortality of the soul. Put alongside of this lesson to the Corinthians, that utterance said to have been addressed by the Emperor Hadrian to his own departing soul, and paraphrased by Pope in the lines, now happily banished from our hymn book, beginning

"Vital spark of heavenly flame,"

put the two, I say, in parallel columns and the contrast between the notions they respectively represent will become evident in a moment. As Paul looks at it, mere disembodiment is of itself no blessing to the soul. The metaphors of the prison-house and the cage, out of which bird or captive, as the case may be, is to be let loose, do not at all commend themselves to him. He looks at man in his completeness. He sees him to be a creature made up of body, soul and spirit, and he says to himself, Surely it would be loss rather gain, were man, in any other life, to find himself less plentifully endowed than he is here. Why disinherit him of a body in that world to come, seeing how wonderfully, in the world that now is, the body has been made tributary to the soul. A better organism, to be sure, the soul may wisely covet, so often does she find herself, as Lord Bacon beautifully puts it, "like a musician unable to utter himself upon an imperfect instrument,"—a better organism she may well desire; but why no organism at all?

Have any good influences, any helpful thoughts reached and taken possession of your inmost self here in this church this morning? They have done so by the aid of the body. These holy visitants have reached you, if reached you they have, by the pathway of the senses. By eye or ear they have entered in and taken possession. The body in no sense caused the influences, but the influences could not have accomplished their errand had these bodily gateways of the mind been barred. To be embodied means for man equipment not imprisonment; the senses are the servants, not the jailers, of the soul.

Men in whose case the right relations of things have been reversed, men, that is to say, who have suffered themselves to become slaves to their senses, these may not unnaturally hope that the severance of soul and body will mean for the real self a long unexercised liberty, but to the spiritually free there can be no attractiveness in the thought of being unclothed of flesh and blood, unless, indeed, there can be coupled with it the further thought of being clothed upon with an organism better than the one relinquished.

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,"

is better than no house at all. There is nothing cheerful in the expectation of our becoming ghosts.

All this ought to be more easily credible to us of the nineteenth than it could be to the men of the first century. Modern research moving along lines suggested by Jesus Christ has brought in far more just conceptions of the value of the body than were entertained under the old philosophies. A modern biologist is in a far better position to appreciate St. Paul's reasoning upon this subject than was either Stoic or Epicurean, on that memorable day when on Mars' Hill both schools united in laughing the Christian doctrine of resurrection to scorn. Juster views about the relation between things material and things immaterial prevail now than prevailed then.

Many there are, no doubt, who, in our day, have cast away their faith in any life to come, holding it to have been nothing better than an empty dream; but of those who still keep a firm grasp upon "the blessed hope" there are comparatively few who like to think about it as the old heathen poets thought about it. To their eye the heavenly country was a place of shadows; to our Christian thinking it is the place where the shadows are to flee away, in order that the eternal realities may appear.

But if these things be so, why is it, you ask, that so many who can say the earlier sentences of the Creed with a good conscience and a firm lip, stumble when they come to the words "I believe in the res-

urrection of the body"? Why is it? It is because they have never faithfully studied this chapter in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, from which our text comes; or, if they have studied it, have done so under pre-possessions that have veiled for them the plain meaning of the words. Is there no one here whose thought rose up in flat contradiction, when I said, just now, that modern research had made St. Paul's teaching more easy of acceptance than it was when first set forth? Is there no one here who has scrupled at this article of the Creed for the very reason that he has supposed it to have been made untenable by facts which the new physics, and the new chemistry have unearthed and put beyond all reach of contradiction? I am quite sure that there are many such. But precisely what is it, let me ask them, that these sciences I just now named have made incredible? Is it the doctrine that in a future life man will find himself an embodied creature? No, it cannot be that, for neither physics nor chemistry knows, or pretends to know, anything whatever about a state of existence other than that in which we find ourselves to-day. Physics and chemistry, so far as they attempt to be prophetic of the future, base all their predictions on the past. The thing that has been is the thing that shall be, so far as their calculations are concerned. As to what may

come to pass under the conditions of a new heaven and a new earth, they neither have, nor pretend to have, anything to tell. Their instruments of analysis and measurement are all of them adjusted to the existing framework of things. "Ah, yes," you answer, "very true, but the question what becomes of the natural body when man dies? is a question that belongs to the present order of things, and, with respect to such a point as that, physics and chemistry do have something to say, and something to which we, in common honesty and fairness, are bound to listen!" Well then, what have they to say? What they have to say is this, that our present knowledge of the laws that govern matter make the notion of a rehabilitation of the dead in the bodies relinquished at the hour of death simply incredible. Well, suppose we grant it, what then? Has St. Paul been silenced? No, not silenced, I answer, only justified. Name, if you can, the modern teacher who insists more strenuously than St. Paul insists, that the body laid in the ground is "not that body that shall be." Name, if you can, the modern teacher who declares in plainer terms than he that "flesh and blood," as we know them, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Name, if you can, the modern teacher who seems more thoroughly convinced than Paul that a natural body is one thing, and a spiritual body another thing.

It is St. Paul's illustration of the seed sown that misleads the superficial student of his thought. Rightly apprehended, that parable is full of help; carelessly interpreted it lands us in endless difficulty and confusion. St. Paul, in this famous illustration, is not comparing the burial of a dead man to the planting of a seed. Those two processes are to the natural eye so much alike that we can scarcely wonder at the prevalence of the misconception. But that it is a misconception is evident the moment we stop to consider that we put a seed into the ground for the very reason that it is alive, whereas we put a dead body into the ground because it is no longer alive. Nothing comes or can come of planting dead seeds. St. Paul does his best to guard us against the blundering interpretation of his parable, by making the pronoun "thou" emphatic, as the revisers of our English New Testament have been careful to note. "That which thou thyself sowest," he says, "is not quickened except it die." What could be plainer than the inference that in the case of human death it is God who is the sower, not we? God plants a personality even as we plant a seed. Our planting is done in the visible earth, his in the land wholly out of sight. We plant a seed in order that the germ hidden within its walls may grow up into a better embodiment than it has now.

God plants a soul, in soil hidden from our eyes, in order that it also may find embodiment adequate and fit.

Dear friends, lift up your eyes from graves. It was not in the tomb, it was away from it, that the risen Saviour showed Himself to Mary Magdalen. Why seek ye the living among the dead? The Easter angel has been asking us that question for well-nigh two thousand years, and we seem not to have learned the full purport of it even yet.

The grave the place of resurrection? God forbid that such a thought should for a moment find lodgment in any Christian mind. Why, some of earth's best and bravest have no graves, and never had. Of others besides Moses, the servant of God, might it be written that no man knoweth their sepulchre unto this day. Where will Wiclif, morning-star of the Reformation, rise from the dead? They took his poor body, or what was left of it, from the grave; they burned it to ashes, and threw the ashes into the Avon; the Avon bore them to the Severn, and the Severn carried them to the sea. Think you it happens thus with what God plants in the seed-plot of eternal life? No; He has better care for his elect than that. The soul is the essential thing. It is there that the true secret of personal identity resides. We may safely trust God to give

it a body as it shall please Him, and to every soul a body rightly expressive of itself.

Does it follow that kindly care of the places where the bodies of our dead are laid is superfluous or blameworthy? Not at all. Even the cast-off garment of the soul has sanctity beyond all common clay. There is little enough of poetry in life, and we can ill afford to scoff at anything that may remain to us of sentiment.

> "'Tis little, but it looks, in truth,
> As if the quiet bones were blest
> Among familiar names to rest,
> And in the places of his youth."

Therefore let us respect old usages and common customs, and the former ways, but let us not make Golgotha our temple, nor think of any local grave as a place out of which life shall come. It was the "image of the earthy" that there was laid. Look elsewhere if you would catch a vision of the "image of the heavenly."

SERMON XXVI.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

"*God is a spirit.* . . ."—JOHN iv. 24.
"*There is a spirit in man.*"—JOB xxxii. 8.

RELIGION rests in the right adjustment of these two primal truths. Practically we acknowledge this every time we say the Creed. The opening sentence of that august confession links together by the word "believe" the spirit in man and the God who is a spirit. I, a spirit, believe in God, a spirit,—this is the affirmation which makes the starting point of Christian faith. Without it worship would be meaningless and service impossible. The spiritual life about which the Bible has so much to say is a life in which these two spirits, the created and the increate, have part; the one as giver, the other as receiver. With regard to this same spiritual life, its reality, its characteristics, its possibilities, I want to talk with you this morning, and I know not that we could have any better foun-

dation for our thoughts than is laid in these two sayings: "God is a spirit," and "There is a spirit in man."

The first great advantage of putting together two such plain emphatic statements is that we are taught to think of the spiritual life as a matter of fact, not a matter of fancy. I apprehend that with a good many people the words "spiritual" and "spirituality" are pretty nearly equivalent to unreal and unreality. Not that they would say so. Respect for the feelings and prejudices of others might keep them from doing that. But were they to speak out their whole minds, they would confess to a rooted distrust of all arguments that make appeal to a world unseen.

The point of first importance, therefore, is to bring about a recognition by the spirit man of the spirit God. Of course, there can be no spiritual life that does not start from this as its initial point and spring. To believe that God is, must always be an indispensable condition of finding and knowing Him. Accordingly we find in the Bible great stress laid on the need of waking men out of that perilous sleep in which they find themselves by nature, and rousing them to a consciousness of the reality of God's existence and presence. It is not enough to assent in a dull, uninterested way to the formal proposition: There is a God. You may clear yourself from the

charge of atheism by saying that; but something more is needed before you can be said to be truly awake to the reality taught in the words, "God is a spirit." The feelings must somehow be reached, the heart must be touched, before you can fairly be said to have your eyes open to the fact that God is. The atmosphere is just as much a reality in a calm as in a storm. But it is doubtful whether men would ever have even surmised the existence of the air if nothing had ever occurred to stir it from the beginning of the world till now. It is commonly the touch of God's hand, that first changes sleepy acquiescence in the fact of his existence into a vivid appreciation of his nearness. Sometimes only a gentle touch is needed, sometimes a heavy blow. But whether it be the one or the other, let a man when he feels it give thanks. He has been roused out of a deadly slumber, a sort of life has been made possible for him which before was not possible.

The next step, or stage, of the spiritual life is reconciliation. The spirit which is in man, made alive to the reality of the God who is a spirit, has not of necessity any love for the newly discovered companion. I had thought myself alone. I am startled to find that I am not alone. But this being who has broken in upon my solitude may be friend or foe,—how can I tell? You see the point of

the remark with which we set out, that religion rests in the right adjustment between the two truths set forth in the two texts, or rather between the two spirits there described. Two men meet in a narrow path. Which shall yield? Whose is the right of way? And so repeatedly, in the simple language of the earlier books of Scripture, God is represented as meeting men. He met Abraham, He met Jacob. He stopped them; He compelled negotiation; He insisted upon an understanding. Even so He meets men now. He stands directly in their way. He blocks the path. How vividly Job phrases it—"He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass." Thus God forces us to terms, He compels us to face the question whether we will live at variance with Him or in peace. The history of heathendom is the history of men's attempts to make their own terms with God, according to the mistaken dictates of the untaught heart. The glory and the blessing of the Christian faith are that it begins at the other end, and gives us God's own terms of reconciliation. The Gospel has been beautifully called the story of our Father's love, and its power lies in this, that it offers man a reconciliation, instead of demanding that he find one for himself. When God and man meet, they are going in opposite directions. The Father says, "Child, turn and go with me." If the answer be a

sullen "No, go thou thy way, and I will keep to mine," that is what the Bible calls impenitence. If, on the other hand, the answer be, even after more or less of hesitation, "Even so, Father, I turn and go with thee," that is what the Bible calls conversion, for conversion means neither more nor less than being turned about. So long as the spirit which is in man insists upon keeping a line of its own, without regard to whether that line runs counter to the motions of the Holy Ghost, just so long there will be discontent and unhappiness. The ways of self-will all incline to death, but the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

And here is where one of the most important functions of the Christian ministry comes in. The true view of the ministry is that which makes the priest the helper of his fellow-men in their times of spiritual need. He is not their substitute, not an official appointed to take the duty of being religious off thier hands for them; he is their helper, their guide, their friend; to him is committed the ministry of reconciliation; he is the ambassador of Christ, charged with the good tidings of God's forgiving love. It is in the fulfilment of this function that I am talking with you now about the meaning of conversion. What other opportunity have I to do it? It is one of the essentials of the spiritual life that it should rest upon this fact of

reconciliation to God. There can be no spiritual life on any other basis. Men may differ, and differ widely about the ways and means of reconciliation, but all who believe that the Spirit of God and the spirit of man are distinct personalities will agree that, between these two spirits there must be an understanding before there can be peace, and all will agree further that if there be a difference of purpose, God's purpose looking one way and man's purpose looking another, it is the created not the Creator Spirit that must yield. Can two walk together except they be agreed?

Passing now what we may call the threshold of the spiritual life, we come to the life itself. We have seen what are the conditions precedent of the spiritual life, we have seen how there must be first a recognition of God, and then a reconciliation with Him, before there can be any entrance upon even the beginnings of godliness; let us next ask what are the characteristics of that life when once begun? Upon this point I purpose dwelling more fully than upon either of the others. What is spirituality of character? How are we to knew it by sight? How may it be nourished? In answering these questions we are not left without guidance, and guidance we greatly need, for spirituality is a thing that has its counterfeits. The true *criteria* of the spiritual life

are to be looked for in those passages of Holy Scripture in which the fruits of the Spirit are enumerated. I shall refer to these again presently, but meanwhile let us consider for a few moments what spirituality of character is not. There are, as I just now reminded you, phases of character which sometimes pass for spirituality, but which do not really deserve that name, nay, more which serve to bring that name into disrespect. Professing no interest whatever in the affairs of this world, utter indifference to the great movements that are going on among men, the strifes of nations, the conflicts of churches, the migrations of races, the growths of new modes of thought, the progress of learning, I say indifference to all these things is sometimes thought to be a sign of spirituality of character. I have known of religious persons who made it a point of conscience not to keep themselves informed upon the current affairs of the day, for fear of losing spirituality. But surely this is a misconception of the nature of the spiritual life. It is hard to think of St. Paul, for instance, as knowing nothing and caring nothing for what was going on in the Roman Empire in his day. His letters are full of indications that he was awake to the active interests of those times. There is nothing of the tone of the hermit in his words. His eye seems to have been always on the watch for illustrations of his doc-

trine, and he drew them from the familiar objects of every-day life. He is, indeed, very earnest to mark a sharp line between the Christian and the heathen ways of living, but that his "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," does not mean what it has sometimes been thought to mean, is plain from his arguing in one place against a certain course, on the ground that if those to whom he is writing were to take it, then they must needs "go out of the world." Nay, let us listen to St. Paul's Master. "I pray not," He says, interceding for the little flock He is so soon to leave, "I pray not that Thou wouldst take them out of the world." You remember, too, how He makes it a ground of accusation against some of the more religious of that day that they did not discern the signs of the times. Now the signs of the times cannot be discerned unless they are studied, and they cannot be studied by those who shut their eyes to them. Hence we are not to suppose that indifference to things present and visible is essential to spirituality in a man. Fervency of spirit may consist with diligence in business, and if we do not see the two things frequently combined, that is not because they cannot be combined; there is no necessary want of harmony between them. The depth of our interest in things unseen is not to be accurately gauged by our indifference to things seen.

Again, spirituality of character does not consist in the habitual use of a stated religious vocabulary. We are not to suppose that only those are truly spiritually minded who are accustomed to express themselves in a phraseology peculiar to this or that school of devotional thought. Spirituality is not a thing that can be tied to any one form of words or set of expressions. One is struck with this, I think, in reading the best books of devotion. Take such widely contrasted authors as Thomas à Kempis, Jonathan Edwards, and Frederick Robertson. Who will deny that each one of these three men was singularly conspicuous for this very characteristic, spirituality, and yet in what diverse phraseology they express themselves. No, spirituality is to a large extent independent of the moulds into which a man's thought has been cast. We must resist the temptation to associate that high trait solely with the way of speaking about religious truth in which we were brought up and to which we have been accustomed. As members of a reformed church, for instance, we hold Rome to be in error, but it would be a violence done to reason as well as to charity, were we to argue that therefore among Romanists it would be vain to look for spirituality. As churchmen, we judge the Puritan theory of ecclesiastical polity to be founded upon a mistake, but he must have read the history of Eng-

land and of New England with sadly blinded eyes, who has failed to discern the lofty spirituality by which many of the Puritan leaders were distinguished. No, we cannot, by shutting any doors of prejudice, confine within a single room the fragrance which will, in spite of us, fill the whole house. Spirituality may be more fostered and better nourished by one administration of Christianity than by another, but in itself spirituality is a possession that attaches to persons, not to systems; it is not to be adequately tested by phrases and catch-words, whether they be those of the sacramental or the evangelical theology. Let us learn to judge men by what they are at heart, instead of pre-judging them by signs that are wholly superficial. It is true that by our words we are to be justified and by our words condemned, but then that Judge is to be one who has the power, which we have not, of going behind the words, and seeing precisely what it is in the speaker's mind for which they stand. The Lord weigheth the spirits.

Once more, spirituality is not to be accurately measured by severity of disposition. Sternness is not a necessary accompaniment of sanctity. It is, indeed, hard to associate boisterousness and joviality with the spiritual mind, but cheerfulness, surely, and a sunny temper are perfectly compatible with it.

The distinctions of popular speech are seldom meaningless, and the fact that we have the two words, sanctity and sanctimony, would seem to be evidence that there is a difference between the two things. Sanctimony is that aping of sanctity which counts upon a show of austereness to serve as the cloak of its disguise. Severity of disposition may be allied with profound spirituality, but we are not to suppose that it is essential to the being of it.

What then are the characteristics of the truly spiritual mind? We have dwelt long enough on the negative side; it is time to turn to the positive. If indifference to things outward and visible be no test, if the use of a special phraseology be no test, if severity of manner, the stern, unyielding temper be no test, where are we to look for *criteria*, how are we to distinguish between the true coin and the counterfeit?

Suppose we make genuine spirituality to lie in heartfelt reverence towards God, and consistent unselfishness in our dealings with our fellow-men. By reverence towards God I mean that habitual sense of the near presence of the Father of spirits, which seems so to accompany some men as to throw a sort of atmosphere about them, the influence of which we feel the moment we enter it. There are precious stones, the amethyst is one, in which the coloring matter is so delicate that the most careful

chemical analysis fails to ascertain either the quality or the quantity of it. And yet this subtle, impalpable something, by its presence there in the crystal, makes all the difference between worthlessness and worth. So it is with this characteristic we are talking about. We may not be able to say what it is about a reverential man that makes him seem to us to carry about with him the presence and something of the power of God; it is not wholly in his words, it is not wholly in his expression of countenance, it is not wholly in any one thing that he does; but somehow it is there, and we feel it. What is the secret of acquiring this unearthly power? It lies, so those who have the best right to say tell us, it lies in being much with God, in holding frequent communion with Him. We cannot be a great deal in the presence of a fellow creature without catching unconsciously more or less of his "tone." Even so, to be often holding intercourse with Him who is a Spirit must impart to the spirit which is in man a something not its own.

We need in our religion more of this element of reverence. It cannot be that we should talk so flippantly as we are wont to do of the Most High God, it cannot be that we should use so lightly his name, his word, his worship, if we were, as we ought to be, alive to his presence, conscious of his continual

judgment. We shall find, I think, if we study the characters of the holy men I just now named and of other men like them, that whatever their differences of theological belief, they all possessed in common this intense consciousness of God's nearness, this habitual reverence for Him as a present Sovereign. If we would acquire spirituality it behooves us to remember to look up.

But not up, only, we must look around as well. God has knit us together in the fellowship of a common humanity, and to forget one another in our endeavors after spiritual achievement is hopelessly to defeat our own object. Hence I made unselfishness the second characteristic of the genuine spirituality. It is easy to make a luxury of religion, to pursue it as a fine art, but to carry it into our homes, to make it serve us in the thousand and one vexations and temptations that spring out of our daily intercourse with the world is not so easy. But if we look carefully at that bright catalogue of graces in which St. Paul enumerates the fruits of the Spirit, we shall find that they are all of them reducible under the one common head of unselfishness.

It is by dint of the homely virtues, and through their patient exercise among inconspicuous scenes, that saintly lives are fashioned. When the end comes, we shall be surprised to find how small a frac-

tion of the thousands of thousands are persons of whom we ever heard here in the earthly life. God grant that before the end comes we may have acquired the spiritual mind. God grant that, having gathered here the first-fruits of the Spirit, we may enter there upon "the happy autumn fields," and rejoice according to the joy in harvest.

SERMON XXVII.

DEVOTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

"*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*"—REV. iv. 8.

THESE are the words under which the doctrine of the Trinity lends itself to the uses of worship. We distinguish, or ought to distinguish, between the devotional and the theological way of putting things in religion. The one method appeals to the mind, the other to the feelings, or to the mind through the feelings. The relation between the two is much the same as that which lies between anatomy as a science and figure-painting as an art. If the picture of an athlete is to impress us with a sense of power there must be a good firm skeleton underneath the flesh-tints, but for art purposes the skeleton must be concealed. So with the great doctrinal truths of religion. It is important that they be distinctly apprehended and firmly held, but as worshippers we like to see them

clothed upon with language that appeals to the affections.

I shall endeavor, this morning, after brushing away a few of the popular misconceptions connected with the subject, to fix your attention on such aspects of the doctrine as pre-eminently commend it to the heart.

That the doctrine easily admits of misrepresentation we all know. The whiter the marble, the more easily can you deface it with a smirch; and it is so with the holiest mysteries of religion; just because they are the holiest, they are also the ones most open to the surface damage which rough hands have it in their power to inflict. But the ancient statues which now and then are lifted from the bed of the Tiber, dripping with mud and ooze, have lost nothing of their faultlessness of form by their long burial, and the eternal truths of God, covered as they may be for a season with the temporary blemishes for which controversy is responsible, fail not, in the end, of the fair judgment which is their due. The harm done to the outside is of little consequence, so long as the proportions and general symmetry remain unhurt.

Avoiding as far as possible the technical phrases of theology, we may define the Church's object in laying so much stress as she does upon the doctrine of Trinity in Unity to be the preservation of the

Christian name of God. To every proper name a certain measure of sanctity attaches. A proper name is the vocal image, the uttered picture of a person, and in so far as the person is respectable, the name is to be respected. We notice this in the common intercourse of life; the names of those we honor and love must not be slightingly used. When we hear a friend spoken of with contempt, we resent it only less vehemently than if we saw some insult put upon his person. He has not been himself injured in the flesh, but this shadowy image, this invisible but most real presence, his name, has suffered hurt, is injured. Everybody now present has names in his memory which it would be impossible for him to hear coupled with words of accusation or disparagement without its rousing in him feelings either of intense sadness, if he knew the epithets to be justly applied, or else of a proper indignation, if he knew them to be slanderous. Of so much moment may be a name, and that the name only of a fellow mortal.

But while there is for every man a little group of names for which he feels himself, as we may say, personally responsible, the names of his near kindred, the names of his more intimate friends, the names of the heroes, whether of history or fiction, after whose lives he seeks in some measure to pattern his own, it is noticeable that no two of these brief catalogues are precisely

alike. To many of the names on your list your neighbor is utterly indifferent; and many of the names on his are, and can be, nothing to you. Instinctively men reach after some one name, that by common consent, shall be allowed to stand at the head of everybody's list, some name potent to hold the allegiance of all alike. In a measure and to a degree, this want is met by certain names of human origin. In primitive forms of society the strongest man, he who can shoot his arrow farthest, or deal the heaviest blow with his axe, is the one in whose name the magnetism centres; under other circumstances it is the hereditary monarch; under still others the successful statesman, the discoverer, the poet, the orator—anybody, in short, who happens to be the foremost representative man. But names of this sort can, at best, only cover a limited area with their influence. They sway the tribe, the clan, the city or the nation, as the case may be, but not the race, not all human kind. It remains for religion to supply the missing Name which is to weld us all together in one common interest, by melting every little irregularity of personal preference with the fervent heat of adoration. And this, nothing less than this, religion seeks to do when she names the name of God. The charms and fascinations, the honors, the loves and the reverences that attach to all

the other names that anywhere are named, belong supremely to this Name. We seem to see the thousands and thousands of thousands who, in times past, have made names for themselves, drawing near, in long procession, to the throne, that they may kneel before it with this simple word of worship on their lips, "Hallowed be thy Name."

Now, if the case be as I have put it, if the hallowing of one name be an act of such supreme importance, it follows as necessary inference that we are in duty bound to use our best endeavors to find out what this name is. Who art thou, Lord? becomes at once the pressing question.

To the eleven apostles the Name into which on the Mount of the Ascension, they were bidden to go and baptize the nations, must have come as a surprise. Indeed it is difficult to imagine an utterance that could more powerfully have stirred their curiosity. These apostles were men who had been brought up in the religion of Moses. The one primary truth that had been impressed upon their minds from infancy was the unity of God. The very core of the Creed lay for them in the words, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Not only so, but they had heard Jesus, their Master, with His own lips reiterate this very sentence. They had actually seen Him put the stamp of his approval

upon it as the first article of the faith. What then could He mean? It could not be that He who had himself insisted with so much emphasis upon the unity of the Divine nature should now be meaning at this supreme moment to turn upon his own teaching, and pull down what He had built. The mind of the Church started, therefore, with this conviction deeply rooted in it, that whatever Christ might have meant by those farewell words of his, He could not possibly have intended to contradict Himself. The end to be sought was some method of reconciliation whereby, without doing violence to reason, it should be seen to be possible to say, "I believe in one God," and to say also, "I believe that God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

As the final result of patient brooding upon the whole subject, there came forth, in due time, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, the true account of which is not that which represents it as a puzzle contrived to baffle and perplex simple-minded people; but rather that which puts it before us as an intellectual help, a stepping-stone, a clew.

But what is gained, some one very naturally asks, by this two-fold presentation of God's nature, first in its unity, and then again in its threeness? In what sense is this new conception of Deity brought in by Christ a gain upon the old? How is it in any practi-

cal manner what it has just been called, a help, a stepping-stone, a clew? To which questions the general answer is this, that whatever leads us up to a fuller and larger and more correct idea of the nature of the being of God must necessarily, and because it does this, be a good thing for us. Made in the image of God, it behooves us to appreciate as fully as may be all that so high an original implies. Now, experience seems to show that the Christian way of looking at the Godhead as comprehending in its unity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, as a matter of fact, more fertile, more suggestive, more promotive of both intellectual and spiritual progress than any other.

Consider one of the evidences of this. The dogma of the unity of God, so far as the mere phrase goes, is held in common by Christians, Mohammedans, and Jews. But unity, as the Christian mind looks at it, carries with it something more than the bare idea of singleness which seems to be the main thought with Hebrew and Moslem. A man is a unit, but we rise to higher ground when we call to mind the unity of the human race, and say that man is one. Only think how much diversity enters into this larger unity! Think of the personal differences, the shades of bodily and mental complexion, the countless variations of age, health, temper, aptitude, worldly con-

dition, refinement, character, nationality, race, all of which are covered and embraced by that large word, which yet is so distinctively suggestive of oneness, of unity, the word Man. In the earlier stages of God's education of us, in the lower classes of the age-long school, the one great point to be guarded against was the worship of many gods. The human mind is so easily over-awed by the huge, threatening forms of outward Nature, by wind, and fire and flood, that the first step taken towards the freedom of the truth had to be that of being brought to believe in the one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. It could never become necessary to unlearn this eternal truth, which is as much the foundation of the universal creed to-day as ever it was; but the time did come, the fullness of time, which prophets had foretold, the time came at last when the Father, by sending forth the Son, and the Son, by sending forth the Spirit, could, without risk to the integrity of men's faith in the divine oneness, marvellously enlarge the horizon of the soul, and enrich our knowledge of what the oneness holds in its embrace. That there are or can be three Gods is a tenet quite as repulsive to the Christian as to the Hebrew or the Mohammedan conscience, but that the divine oneness is of such a sort as to consist harmoniously with the divine threeness,

and that the threeness is of such a sort as in no wise to contradict or to impair the oneness, the Christian thinker not only rejoices to believe, but counts himself the richer for believing.

One of the leading thoughts in modern scientific discovery, one of the controlling principles of what is known as the logic of research is that of there being a constant interplay and correlation of forces, all of which are various, while yet all conform with the strictest obedience to one comprehensive scheme, the many forces going forth from and returning to the one everywhere pervasive force. It would be most interesting were a competent person to seek to ascertain in what measure this modern mode of studying the universe is indebted for its original impulse to the Christian conception of Deity as three in one and one in Three. The cavils at this article of the Church's faith which find expression in arithmetical protests and blackboard demonstrations of the absurdity of a doctrine thankfully embraced by some of the most powerful intellects of the past, look very small indeed, when seen in the light of these far-reaching similitudes. The measureless debt of gratitude which modern science owes to the New Testament will one of these days be frankly, even if tardily, acknowledged, and prominent among the items of obligation will then stand this idea of a diversity pervading the

unity of God's nature, which Jesus Christ unveiled when He gave that final command of his :—Go and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I trust I have brought out distinctly my thought that the doctrine of the Trinity is propounded to us by the Church, not as an enigma, but as a help towards the solution of an enigma which is on our hands whether we will or no. Nobody is foolish enough to maintain that the doctrine clears up everything and floods all the inner chambers of the mind with daylight. Indeed, there are few things from which we may more properly pray to be delivered than a religious teaching which can brook no mystery, and to which all growths, from the cedar to the hyssop, are equally intelligible. Whitewash the temple, tear down the veil, let a fresh breeze drive out the cloud, and you may have made what you are pleased to consider a more tidy place of worship, but the glory has departed; it is the house of the heavenly presence no longer. Assuredly the Christian doctrine of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost fails to enable us to understand all mysteries and all knowledge; but as one standing in the gateway of a mountain country, with the gorges and river courses opening out before him in this direction and in that, slope merging in slope, and height towering above

height, may be said to have a better knowledge of the region than he had when he looked off at it in the distance from the plain below, notwithstanding the fact that at the same moment his appreciation of the intricacies of the place is wonderfully heightened by the nearer view; so the believer, rising to the Christian conception of the divine nature, is at once enlightened and awe-stricken by what he sees; more than he knew he knows, but of how much more than he suspected is he ignorant!

People lift up hands of protest against the notion that the acceptance of abstract propositions can have anything whatsoever to do with the saving of the soul. But are such protests reasonable? The affirmation "God is love," is an "abstract proposition," and it might be argued that because it is such we ought not to suppose that the believing it or the disbelieving it can make much difference to a man. And yet we know that it does make all the difference in the world, indeed may make all the difference between one's being saved or lost, whether he accepts the statement "God is love," or rejects it. And so the knowledge that in God he has a Father who has made him, a Saviour who has died for him, and a Holy Ghost who is for ever seeking to bless and cleanse his life, this may have a real softening and restraining influence upon a man's heart, this may

aid in bringing him to that state of peace with God, which we call salvation, or the safety of the soul. Of course it is absurd and wicked to say of any article of the faith that the mere repetition of it with the lips can act like a talisman upon the gates of heaven, to make them fly open at the believer's approach. It is the receiving of truth into the very heart's blood that renovates the man, and nourishes the whole fibre and tissue of his life. Doctrines are nothing to us until they take hold of us in such a way as to mould our characters and make new creatures of us, and only in so far as the truth which the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity enshrines does this for us can it be properly said to contribute anything to our salvation.

But in what conceivable way, some one asks, can a doctrine, apparently so abstruse and metaphysical as this one is, possibly have any influence upon spiritual growth and well-being? How can it be even so much as imagined to feed the soul? Before trying to show how, I might very properly dwell upon the historical fact of the survival of the doctrine through so many ages as an evidence that there must be something very precious and worthy in it. Were it the dry and barren form of words it is sometimes represented as being, it is scarcely likely that generation after generation of believers would

have thought it worth while to hand it on. But I do not dwell upon this point; instead of doing so, I shall try to show briefly, as I promised to do, some of the reasons for the tenacious grasp which this faith has held upon the affections of Christendom.

Observe, then, that this doctrine of the divine Trinity in Unity has proved itself the conservator and upholder of other beliefs which appeal more evidently to the affections than it does itself, but which, experience has proved, will in the long run stand or fall with it. This is the reason why Trinity Sunday is made the crown and climax of that part of the Christian year which commemorates the life of Christ. All the momentous truths that lie scattered along our path, from the first Sunday in Advent to Whit-Sunday, are gathered up into a single sheaf to-day, and this strong formula serves as a three-fold cord to bind them into unity. Take, for example, the belief of which Christmas Day is the commemoration, namely, the union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the doctrine of the eternal Fatherhood and the eternal Sonship which alone can keep, so experience would seem to teach, that precious faith of the Saviour's divinity bright and clear. But the doctrine of the eternal Fatherhood and the eternal Sonship is part of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Disown the threeness of the Godhead,

and presently your teaching about Christ's divinity will become thin, shadowy, vague.

Again, take the doctrine of the Atonement, the belief in the sacrificial character of the death of Christ. certainly all must acknowledge the tremendous hold which that has had upon the affections of men. Only think of the power lodged in the simple sentence, "The Saviour died for me." How many sorrowful hearts it has comforted! What millions of wounded consciences it has healed! What countless lives it has animated and inspired, and lifted out of listlessness into activity! Whether you believe the statement which the sentence conveys, or disbelieve it, you cannot, as a fair observer of the past, deny the fact that influence immeasurable has flowed from it. Well then, consider what help and support this article of the faith, "Christ died for us," has received, and, from the nature of the case, always must receive from the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. Deny the essential deity of Christ, declare Him to be a creature and a creature only, and what doctrine could be more monstrous than such a one as the Atonement? A single sinless creature chosen out from among his fellow-creatures to bear the penalty which the others, and the others only, have deserved —could anything possibly be suggested more repugnant to our natural sense of what is right, and fair,

and just than that? But only once recognize in the lamb of sacrifice, only discern in the person of the sufferer a God-man, see in Him one who has consciously, out of the depths of an infinite compassion, taken our nature upon Him and endured the humiliation of the cross, that we might be lifted up—once view the matter in this light, and while there may still remain much in the doctrine of the Atonement mysterious and difficult to grasp, it will yet stand free from that opprobrium which must inevitably attach to it so long as we hold Christ to have been a holy man, a saint, a prophet, a martyr, and nothing more.

By way of rejoinder to all this, it may of course be urged that every one of these phases of religious emotion with respect to God is just as possible when we think of Him only in his oneness as when we contemplate Him both in Unity and in Trinity. There is no time to argue that point now, even if controversy were the line we had agreed to take to-day; but I would simply suggest that neither the Hebrew nor the Mohammedan religion, each of which rejects with vehemence the Trinity of the Godhead, while earnestly maintaining its Unity, has shown itself especially prolific of the emotions in question. If it be asked why we should look to Islam and to Judaism for our illustrations, rather than to

such forms of dissent from the traditional faith as have sprung up within the limits of Christendom, the answer is, that before judging of the merits or demerits of a doctrine, we are bound to study the workings of it upon the very largest ascertainable scale, and through the very longest ascertainable periods of time. Organized repudiation of the Church's ancient belief in Father, Son and Holy Ghost inside the Christian community has been usually, perhaps always, provincial as respects area, and transitory as respects endurance. Jew and Moslem, on the other hand, have histories of which they may well be proud. Many lands and many ages know them by sight. We, therefore, avoid at once both invidious comparisons and unsafe conclusions, when we transfer our critical study of this question from the mixed field of modern denominationalism into the wider and less encumbered territory occupied by religions confessedly wholly distinct from the Christian, religions which have put monotheism pure and simple to the test of practical trial upon an enormous scale. As religions they stand unquestionably far in the van of heathenism; but as religions they unquestionably lag, let it be owned with equal frankness, far in the rear of Christianity. At the head of the armies of the living God which go forth conquering and to conquer on this earth of ours, rides One who hath "on his vesture and

on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

In conclusion, suffer me a few words with respect to the spirit and temper in which it befits us as believers to held the faith. We have no occasion for nervous anxiety lest somehow God's truth should fail, unless we show a competency to defend it. Such anxiety, if we entertain it, will be apt to betray itself in petulance, which is one of the weakest of all weapons that can possibly be put in use for the defence of the truth. Calmness and patience make the frame of mind in which those who enjoy the happiness of a settled faith are in duty bound to keep themselves. Especially in connection with the high and holy topic we have had before us to-day is anything like loud-voiced wrangling and hot dispute most grievously out of place. What the world calls blasphemy is not the only form of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain, and there is no moment when we more fervently need to pray "Hallowed be thy Name," than when we are entering upon controversies which have ostensibly the defence of God's honor for their object, but which too often develope into poor attempts to exhibit our own skill.

Grant unto us all, O thou Holy One of Israel, more of the spirit of worship and of awe. Make us feel as Moses felt when at the hearing of thy voice he put

the shoes from off his feet, knowing that he trod on holy ground; give us the mind that was in Isaiah, when, humbled at the sight of thy majesty, while the seraphim sang their trisagion in the temple, he cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips"; nay, better still, bring us into the school of Christ, lead us to his feet as He sits teaching upon the mount; that gathering wisdom from those lips which spake as never man spake, we also may be enabled to uplift the cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High.

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